

**THE RECORD CONNOISSEUR'S MAGAZINE**

# **THE AMERICAN MUSIC LOVER**

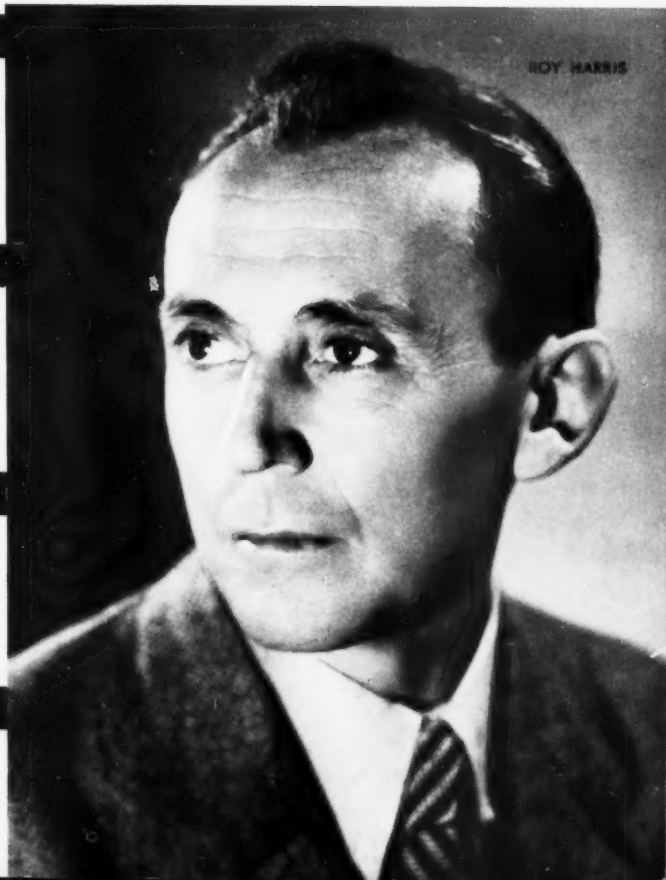
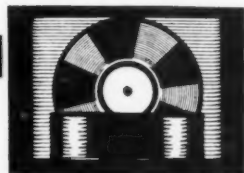
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**APRIL, 1941**

**TECHNICAL AND  
MUSICAL  
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ROY HARRIS

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# THE AMERICAN MUSIC LOVER

## Editorial Notes

Volume VII, No. 8

April, 1941

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A FRIENDLY reader writes, in part: "For many years now I have been an ardent admirer, which is decidedly an understatement, of Mozart's music, and for a long time I was surprised that more of my music-loving friends did not seem to share my enthusiasms. After discussion with many people, some of whom I considered to have much greater understanding of music than I, I began to doubt my own taste. For a time I kept Mozart to myself as a kind secret weakness. When I started collecting records, I found that nine times out of ten, I would leave the record shop with a Mozart album under my arm, after having listened to a variety of composers. Well, all of this is just leading up to an expression of my sincere thanks to you for restoring confidence in my own taste. I do not hesitate so much now to talk to others about my great enthusiasm for Mozart."

It seems strange that Mozart should still require defending. We hasten to assure our reader that he is in very distinguished company, for there have been few masters of music, from Haydn down to Sibelius, who have not shared his admiration for Mozart. There has never been any question about his place among the greatest composers of all times, and that this opinion would seem to be shared by the great bulk of ordinary music lovers, as well as by musicians, is indicated by the steady upward climb of sales of Mozart records. We offer an anecdote which our reader can tell his friends for what it is worth. About thirty years ago a distinguished professor of science in the University of St. Petersburg suffered what we should call today a "nervous breakdown". After years of convalescence in a sanatorium, he returned to his work, cured and mentally whole. He related later that for especially trying periods in those years he had found one infallible cure. When particularly upset or discouraged, he would sit down at a piano and play Mozart and after a while his mood would vanish and he would be at peace again. No other music but Mozart's was able to do this for him.

## Beethoven's Missa Solemnis\*

Lawrence Gilman

TOWARD the end of August, in the year 1819, Beethoven's devoted friend and biographer Anton Schindler, went to call upon Ludwig at his country home in Mödling, accompanied by Johann Horsalka. "It was four o'clock in the afternoon," wrote Schindler in his biography. "As soon as we entered we learned that in the morning both servants had gone away, and that there had been a quarrel after midnight which had disturbed all the neighbors, because, as a consequence of a long vigil, both had gone to sleep, and the food which had been prepared had become unpalatable. In the living room, behind a locked door, we heard the master singing, howling, stamping. After we had been listening a long time to this almost awful scene, and were about to go away, the door opened and Beethoven stood before us with distorted features, calculated to excite fears . . . Never, it may be said, did so great an art work see its creation under more adverse circumstances."

It was the *Missa Solemnis* by which Beethoven was possessed. We need not wonder at his agitation. For, in addition to his prodigious labors on the Mass, Beethoven was in bad health, he was distraught by personal difficulties of various kinds, and, as though he were not sufficiently occupied by the task of composing the most formidable religious score since the *B minor Mass* of Bach, he had but lately been making side trips into the difficult uplands of the *Ninth Symphony*.

It was Beethoven's original intention to compose his setting of the words of the Mass to celebrate the installation as Archbishop of Olmütz of his pupil and patron, the Archduke Rudolf of Austria. The Archbishop's appointment became known about the middle of 1818; and Schindler

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tells us that "without bidding, invitation, or summons of any kind, Beethoven resolved to compose a mass for the solemnity; thus turning again, after the lapse of many years, to that branch of his art toward which, after the symphonic form—as he himself often said—he felt himself most drawn . . . I saw the score [continues Schindler] begun late in the autumn of 1818, after the gigantic *Sonata in B flat major, Opus 106*, had just been finished."

Beethoven gave himself heart and soul to the composition of the Mass, which was not only dedicated to the Archduke, but had been intended for him from the beginning—a fact which Thayer cites as proof that despite Beethoven's "petulant outbursts against his exalted pupil, he was, after all, sincerely devoted to him," although Beethoven had written to Ries in a letter dated only six months before that his "unlucky connection with the Archduke" had brought him "to the verge of beggary." But Beethoven, as Thayer remarks, sometimes used his friends as whipping boys, and his words and deeds were not always consistent with each other.

Portions of the Mass, probably the *Kyrie* and perhaps the *Gloria*, had been sketched by the end of 1818. The seriousness with which Beethoven applied himself to his task is indicated by his notations in the Tagebuch. For example:

"In order to write true church music . . . look through all of the monastic church chorales and also the strophes in the most current translations and perfect prosody in all Christian-Catholic psalms and hymns generally.

"Sacrifice again all the pettinesses of social life to your art. God above all things! For it is an eternal providence which directs omnisciently the good and evil fortunes of human men . . . Tranquilly will I submit myself to all vicissitudes and place my safe confidence in Thine

unalterable goodness, O God! Be my rock, my light, forever my trust!"

Rudolf's installation as Archbishop occurred on March 20, 1820; but Beethoven had long since given up any hope of completing his Mass in time for the event. A mass by Hummel and an offertory by Hadyn were performed instead, and Beethoven went doggedly on with his score. It was not finished until the middle of 1823.

The first performance anywhere of the Mass was given under the auspices of Beethoven's ardent and generous admirer, Prince Nicolas Galitzin, at St. Petersburg, on April 6, 1824, about a month prior to the performance at Vienna—May 7—of the *Kyrie*, *Credo* and *Agnus Dei* (at the same concert which offered the first hearing of the *Ninth Symphony*). Prince Galitzin's remarkable achievement in accomplishing the premiere of the gigantic Mass out of his own resources has had curiously little recognition. In the article in Grove's Dictionary concerning the Prince, not a word is said of it. The Petersburg performance, however, is duly noted in the Thayer-Krehbiel *Life of Beethoven* (Vol. III, p. 103).

Performances of the Mass in New York have been few and far between. Almost half a century elapsed after its first hearing in Europe before it reached the New World. The first performance in America was probably by the Church Musical Association of New York at Steinway Hall May 2-3, 1872—"a very inadequate one," according to Krehbiel . . .

#### Difficulties and Problems

Doubtless the infrequency with which the work has been given here may be attributed largely to the cruel difficulty of the music—the parts for the singers are written with Beethoven's usual indifference to the limitations of the human voice. But, aside from this, the work offers many problems of style and interpretation. Beethoven paid scant attention to the rubrics, to institutional traditions and properties, to liturgical formulas. His passionate and dramatizing imagination had not gone far in its dealing with the text when it overleaped all bounds and went its own way. For Beethoven had fixed

his mind and heart less on the churchly rubrics than on the immemorial human realities that lie behind and below and above the missal text—upon the pitiful and everlasting soul of man, suffering, fearing, longing, pleading, hoping, worshiping, praying.

Yet Beethoven himself declared that his chief design when writing the Mass "was to arouse religious emotion in singers and auditors alike, and to render this emotion lasting." The depth and intensity of Beethoven's piety admit of no dispute, although at no time in his mature life was he an orthodox churchman. "If order and beauty are reflected in the constitution of the universe, then there is a God," he wrote in his diary two years before he began the composition of the Mass. And although the cynical might wonder how much weight the initial "If" in that sentence possessed in Beethoven's mind, it is impossible to arrive at any true understanding of the fundamentals of Beethoven's character and not realize that his religious beliefs were wholly unquestioning, wholly unaffected by any touch of intellectual subtlety. The Mass had its origin in a period during which Beethoven was oppressed by the melancholy and distress that were caused by his personal difficulties; yet we know from his own record of thoughts at this time that his simple, unchallenging theism never deserted him. "Hard is thy situation at present," he confided touchingly to his journal at this period, "but He above is, oh, He is! and nothing is without Him. God, my refuge, my rock, Thou seest my heart! Oh hear, Ever Ineffable One, hear me, Thy most unhappy of mortals!"

#### A Towering Score

Beethoven recommended the *Mass in D* to the King of France as "l'oeuvre le plus accompli." He has not been left alone in his favorable opinion of it. His most devoted apostle in this country, Henry Edward Krehbiel, once unhesitatingly hailed the work as "the greatest of all compositions for voice and orchestra"; and Beethoven's French biographer, Vincent d'Indy, has declared that in the presence of the *Mass in D* we stand before a work with which only the *B minor Mass* of Bach and the *Parsifal* of Wagner can be compared.

These towering superlatives seem not inappropriately altitudinous. This Opus 123 of Beethoven is very great music—no wonder Beethoven raved and agonized as it was born of him, crying out in anguish while it was taking shape in his imagination and on his music paper. Those who were about him at the time say that he “seemed to be transfigured by it.” He had the meaning of the Latin words of the text minutely explained to him, with their

proper accentuation. For almost five years he dwelt with them, filled with the anguish of parturition, but also with the ecstasy that must have sustained him as sheet after sheet of the wonderful score passed across his desk; and then one day he set down the last note, and on the manuscript of the *Kyrie* he wrote the simple and characteristic words “Von Herzen—möge es wieder zu Herzen gehen!” (“From the heart—may it go to the heart!”)

## Recommended Piano Concertos

IT is easy to select the most popular violin concertos — four immediately come to mind — but in determining the popularity of piano concertos, the list does not narrow itself down so easily. A few years ago, in a conversation I had with the late Lawrence Gilman, he quickly picked the Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Brahms and Bruch violin concertos as those most widely loved. He also expressed his belief that the four prime favorites in piano concertos with artists and public alike were the Mozart *A major* (K. 488), the Beethoven *Emperor* (or possibly the third, in C minor), the Schumann *A minor*, and the Tchaikowsky *B flat minor*. Some, he added, might be inclined to give Liszt's *E flat Concerto* preference over the Tchaikowsky. Mr. Gilman was talking “off the record”, and when I noted that the Grieg concerto had been omitted he conceded that it undoubtedly belonged in a group of favorites.

The popularity of a composition need not necessarily be a criterion in assembling a record collection; yet it would seem that most musical listeners are eager to acquire as the backbone of their collections familiar and greatly loved works. Admirable and rewarding as this pursuit can prove, it might be advisable to pass up some old friends in favor of other works. For, in an age like ours, when one can always hear the most familiar material on the radio, it might well turn out that the urge to return to recordings of repeatedly-

played works would not be with one too often. It is possible to become surfeited with some of the best music. Nevertheless, there are old favorites that belong in every record library, among them the *Emperor*, the lovely Mozart *A major*, and the eminently beautiful Schumann *A minor*. As for the Tchaikowsky it is safe to say that most musical listeners would want it also; and I for one believe that the majority would unhesitatingly select it before they would an opus by Liszt. Of the latter's two concertos, the seldom heard *A major* might be a better choice, for it is representative of his poetic powers in a more compensating vein. But I admit, reluctantly, that it is quite possible that the majority might even select the Liszt works before they would the Mozart. And so we find, in an endeavor to boil down the prime favorites among piano concertos, that we are faced with a debatable project. Fortunately, however, in assembling a list for our readers we are not concerned with a dogmatic recommendation of four works, for most of our requests have been for lists numbering from six to twelve. The following have been selected by members of the staff of this magazine, and to each choice is appended a few notes outlining the reasons for our selection. Next month we shall draw up a list of recommended concertos for violin and other stringed instruments.

1. HAYDN: *Concerto in D major*:  
Wanda Landowska with orchestra



conducted by Eugene Bigot. Victor set M-471.

Far from being a period piece, as some would have us believe, this concerto is a striking example of Haydn's powers at their most persuasive. There is energy, wit, and fine expressiveness in this music, which is an excellent example of the 18th-century concerto prior to Mozart. Moreover, the performance of Wanda Landowska is one of superb compulsion and eloquence. Here is a strong argument for the harpsichord; after this performance, the same work played on the piano seems devitalized and pallid.

2. MOZART: *Concerto in D minor*, K. 466; Bruno Walter and the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. Victor set M-420.

Since there is no wholly satisfactory recording of the *A major Concerto*, K. 488, we recommend the great *D minor* as one of the first of Mozart's many rewarding piano concertos to obtain. This is a magnificent work, full of intense drama — its very key signature is significant, as Eric Blom points out, the same in which Mozart was later "to express Donna Anna's agitated grief, the ghostly appearance of the stone guest and the vengeful passion of the Queen of the Night". The work is strongly romantic, and supports the contention that Mozart anticipated the romanticism of the early 19th century. We have selected Bruno Walter's performance because it is a felicitous souvenir of his close association with the Vienna Philharmonic, and also because it represents him in the dual role of pianist and conductor. The Fischer set is equally as fine, however, although the recording there is not quite as good as in the Walter.

3. MOZART: *Concerto in G major*, K. 453; Edwin Fischer and his Chamber Orchestra. Victor set M-481.

Although the *E flat Concerto*, K. 482 is another great favorite, we would recommend the present work, which Tovey calls "one of Mozart's richest and wittiest", as our second choice. The music is close to Mozart's operatic style; indeed the first and last movements are definitely in the spirit of high comedy, while the slow movement has a sustained purity of mood

which is one of the rare bequests that Mozart left to listeners of a later and more hectic day. Fischer has given us an attractive performance with an orchestra not so large as to drown the nuances of the music.

4. BEETHOVEN: *Concerto No. 4 in G major*, Op. 58; Arthur Schnabel and London Phil. Orchestra, directed by Malcolm Sargent. Victor set M-156.

Of all the concertos Beethoven wrote, this has always seemed to us the most enduring, the most rewarding. Its beauty, as one writer has said, has an almost unearthly quality, a fact that is apparent with the very opening statement of the piano. Its composition was sandwiched in between that of the *Appassionata Sonata* and the three Rasoumovsky quartets, Op. 59. All three of its movements "demonstrate the esthetic principles of concerto form with extraordinary subtlety" (Tovey). The first movement is highly interesting in its treatment of repeated notes; the slow movement is a beautiful dialogue between the orchestra and the piano. And the finale is a fitting spurt of elation to complete the picture. Schnabel's performance of this concerto is one of the best things he has done for the phonograph; it is a smoother and less agitated interpretation than the more recent one by Giesekeing.

5. BEETHOVEN: *Concerto No. 5 in E flat*, Op. 73 (*Emperor*); Arthur Schnabel and the London Symphony Orchestra, direction of Sargent. Victor set M-155.

The sobriquet by which this popular work is known would hardly have pleased Beethoven. Yet the concerto is majestic and full of dramatic ostentation. It has always been more imposing to us in the concert hall, under the hands of a great executant, than on records, since the mood of the long first movement is disturbed by the recording breaks. The thematic material of the first movement is bold and triumphant. The adagio owns an ineffable beauty, and the finale ranks among the best of the composer's rondos. Of the several performances of this work on records, Schnabel's undoubtedly takes first place, yet there is much to say for Giese-

king's superbly disciplined and sensitive rendition, with its better orchestral background.

6. SCHUMANN: *Concerto in A minor*, Op. 54; Myra Hess and orchestra, conducted by Walter Goehr. Victor set M-473.

The Schumann concerto is one of the richest works that he left us. Its lyric beauty owns expansiveness and depth. Perhaps it is only a fancy on our part, but it seems to us that Myra Hess brings to this work a fine sensitivity of phrasing and a deftly nuanced expressiveness that would have delighted the composer. Perhaps it is the perfect feminine touch which Schumann knew and valued so highly in his own Clara!

7. BRAHMS: *Concerto No. 2 in B flat*, Op. 83; Vladimir Horowitz and NBC Symphony Orchestra, direction of Arturo Toscanini. Victor set M-740.

This concerto has often been referred to as a symphony with a piano part. It is a work that grows on one with repeated performances. Its stormy scherzo was long a source of controversy; one recalls Brahms' remarks on being asked why he inserted it in the work, "Well, you see, the first movement is so *simple*". The beauty of the third movement is unassailable; the mood is noble and sublime. And the finale is an unforgettable delight. This concerto, more than most others, requires perfect teamwork between soloist and conductor. It is for this reason that we would select this latest performance of it, by Horowitz and Toscanini.

8. GRIEG: *Concerto in A minor*, Op. 16; played by Walter Gieseking and the Berlin State Opera Orchestra, directed by Rosbaud. Columbia set M-313.

Grieg did not have the wide objective point of view; his was an expression of subjective delicacy and lyrical purity. The nearest he came to breadth of style in the grand manner was in the opening of his piano concerto. It is the best of his larger works. One may become surfeited with the lyrical delicacy and harmonic clichés of this music, but it is more than likely that most music lovers will be charmed for a long time by its youthful

freshness of invention and its deep poetic spirit. Gieseking has played the work with feeling and strength. There is also a fine performance by Backaus.

9. LISZT: *Concerto No. 2 in A major*; Egon Petri and London Phil. Orchestra, conducted by Leslie Howard. Columbia set M-362.

Liszt's piano concertos are rightfully regarded as virtuoso works, permitting an exhibition of the artist's technical prowess. Their popularity is not based on their ostentation alone. Of the two works, this one has much more to be said for it. It is written in Liszt's richest and most fervent style, and is one of his most poetic compositions. Music like this requires the genius of a great virtuoso to justify its existence, and the brilliant performance of Petri does just this. It would be our choice for those who feel compelled to add a Liszt concerto to their collection.

10. TSCHAIKOWSKY: *Concerto in B flat minor*, Op. 23; Arthur Rubinstein and the London Symphony, directed by John Barbirolli. Victor set M-180.

There are few more impressive themes than the radiant and sturdy opening one of this concerto. Yet this is music that can surfeit, if heard too often. Tschai-kowsky's imperfections are due more to the overwhelming richness of his emotions, as one writer has said, than to any mental shortcomings. He was a great melodist, and he had the knack of inventing tunes that people could remember. This concerto is filled with many such tunes. Rubinstein gives the most brilliant and enkindling performance of this concerto on records; the Petri performance, although rather better recorded, is somewhat lacking in spontaneity despite its masterful discipline and fluency. But the listener is advised to hear both sets before making a choice.

11. RACHMANINOFF: *Concerto No. 2 in C minor*, Op. 18; Benno Moise-witch and the London Phil. Orch., direction of Walter Goehr. Victor set M-666.

This is, to our way of thinking, by all odds the best music that Rachmaninoff has written. It is a rather early work,



but in it he wrote down adequately what later he constantly repeated not so adequately. The first movement is energetic and compact. The melodies are highly individual and are treated with real finesse. Here occurs one of the grandest climaxes in all piano concerto literature. The second movement is one of Rachmaninoff's most poetic utterances, while the third allows for transcendent virtuosity, and possesses one of the most famous of Rachmaninoff themes. There are two recordings of this work. Unfortunately the brilliant cooperation of the composer and Stokowski is considerably dimmed by the age of the recording. The recent Moiseivitch-Goehr set is a worthy successor, and is one of the most outstandingly realistic recordings of a concerto extant.

12. FRANCAIX: *Concerto*; Jean Francaix and Paris Phil. Orch., conducted by Nadia Boulanger. Victor discs 15114/15.

Among the younger French composers of today, Francaix stands out as the most gifted. There is true Gallic wit in this music and a distinctive piquancy and sparkle. The music is skillfully devised and brilliantly fresh and spontaneous. It is our choice of a first among modern concertos. Next in line we'd probably turn to the Milhaud concerto. The present work is not long; there are four movements, each taking a single record face. There is a swiftly paced first movement, suggestive of a perpetuum mobile, and a tenderly placid slow movement, almost Mozartean in style, with some felicitous scoring which allows for a dialogue between the piano and the horns and woodwinds. The scherzo is fleet-footed and spirited; and the finale is full of rhythmic buoyancy. The work has wit, good humor, and constant animation, which keep one's mind active at the same time that one's senses are pleasantly stimulated.

— P.H.R.

## Technical Notes

### More About Pick-ups

Leland L. Chapman

THE development in pick-ups within the last year has placed emphasis on light stylus<sup>1</sup> pressure. Today pick-ups, both magnetic and crystal types, are available having a stylus pressure much lighter than the three or more ounces of pressure that has long been standard.

A low pressure pick-up has always been recognized as advantageous, but there were few, if any, that were in a price range that made them available to the average phonophile. This is explained, in part, by the fact that in the design and manufacture of a pick-up the pressure on the stylus cannot be selected at will. The pressure is dependent on the structural characteristics of the pick-up, principally upon the amount of

1. "Stylus" is used generically to refer to the point which contacts the record grooves, irrespective of its material or type of mounting.

damping or stiffness in the vibrating structure that is actuated by the stylus. With highly damped pick-ups there is more resistance to movement of the stylus by the lateral variations in the record grooves. In order that the highly damped pick-up may track properly in the groove, a relatively large pressure must be applied to hold the stylus in the groove.

The mass of the vibrating structure, because it includes the needle, needle holder, and the fastening screw, must of necessity be large and this tends to introduce resonant frequencies or "peaks", which make the response uneven. This difficulty is more pronounced when the high frequency range is extended in making a high fidelity pick-up. The introduction of "peaks" is avoided most readily and a more uniform re-

sponse obtained by utilizing higher damping which in turn requires higher stylus pressure to make the stylus track.

It is true that in some of the higher grade pick-ups uniformity in response is achieved with light damping and lower stylus pressure, but such pick-ups are more expensive to design and manufacture. In general, therefore, the design of an inexpensive pick-up has been a compromise between price, frequency response and stylus and damping pressure.

In the last year considerable attention has been paid to lightening the weight of the pick-up. Advertisements even in non-technical or non-musical magazines call attention to a pick-up of one ounce pressure at a reasonably low price. It is interesting to inquire how this is achieved. One way of accomplishing this has been to use a permanent sapphire stylus built into the pick-up. This eliminates all the needle holding and damping structure and permits the vibrating parts to be reduced in mass so that resonant frequencies are less prominent, if in fact they are not removed beyond the reproduction range<sup>2</sup>. This, in turn, makes it possible to use lighter damping, and consequently to reduce the needle pressure.

In pick-ups of this type, the built in sapphire is merely a means to an end: it permits a low vibrating mass, therefore a low damping and low stylus pressure in an inexpensive pick-up. The lightening of the stylus pressure is a decided advantage and is to be preferred to a heavier pick-up, provided other disadvantages have not been introduced, such as the sapphire, which more than offsets the advantages. Therefore, while this new structure gives a reasonably good frequency range and uniformity of response with low stylus pressure, and at a reasonably low price, it is pertinent to inquire if the permanent sapphire has disadvantages that outweigh the advantages permitted by its use.

There are two schools of thought on this point and there probably always will be.

2. This is not to be confused with a "needle" with a sapphire point, the use of which requires the usual needle mounting and clamping means in the pick-up. Such a sapphire needle is of no advantage over an ordinary metal needle insofar as permitting less damping.

For those who dislike changing needles or use automatic record players for long periods, the sapphire is, no doubt, an advantage that is not outweighed by any possible disadvantages. The principal disadvantage of the sapphire stylus can be traced to lack of uniform groove formation in the record. Many of the European records have differently shaped grooves and many do not play successfully with the sapphire stylus of the shape commonly supplied with pick-ups available today. Some users of these pick-ups complain that some records, often those recorded in Europe, reproduce with much distortion with a permanent sapphire pick-up whereas other records reproduce entirely satisfactorily with the same pick-up. Some records, however, contain much distortion that is introduced at the time of recording, particularly in the higher frequencies. This is not apparent when the records are played with pick-ups which do not reproduce these higher frequencies. If the permanent sapphire pick-up has high fidelity characteristics, it may be that the distortion inherent in the record is simply being reproduced by the pick-up<sup>3</sup>.

The matter of stylus and groove shape is not so serious a problem with other needles because such needles soon wear so as to fit the groove, but sapphire does not shape itself as readily as steel or fiber. Hence, if it doesn't fit the groove, the reproduction will not be perfect and the record will wear because the stylus pressure is too heavy. Particularly is this so if the sapphire point is "thicker" or wider than the width of the groove so that the sapphire rides on the side walls of the groove and is prevented from riding freely in the bottom of the groove.

If the stylus pressure is light, the wear of course will be less, but there are those who claim that a sapphire which does not

3. Mr. Lanier told the writer an interesting story about purchasing an album of records which he listened to on the demonstration machine in a record store. The records reproduced splendidly, he thought. Later he called on a manufacturer of high fidelity phonograph equipment and played the records on this machine, at which time reproduction was clearly inferior. Mr. Lanier concluded, after much investigation, that the records contained distortion which simply was not being reproduced on the demonstration machine of non-high fidelity characteristics.

fit the groove will damage the record even though the pressure is but a fraction of an ounce. However, the writer questions that a pick-up having a pressure of one ounce or less and a poorly fitting sapphire stylus will do any more damage to a record than a pick-up having a three or four ounce pressure and using a steel, a chromium or other long playing metal needle, such as required in an automatic record changer.

Lessening of record wear is believed to be a definite point in favor of the light weight sapphire pick-ups, and if one is selected having a sapphire shaped so that it can reproduce the majority of records the new pick-ups are an advance over the heavier pick-ups in the same price range<sup>4</sup>.

Low stylus pressure will not eliminate scratch to any appreciable extent in new records that have an *initially* noisy surface.

However, in lowering record wear, more playouts from a record will be obtainable without the records becoming too noisy through wear. The lower damping inherent in light pressure pick-ups also introduces less wear on the side walls since there is less resistance to lateral stylus movement.

The *Brush PL models* (referred to in the December, 1939 issue of this magazine) were among the earliest. Two sapphire stylus models were introduced having pressures of one-half and one ounce respectively. This compares remarkably well with the heavier pressures almost universally used in the usual pick-ups. The *Brush* models, particularly the more expensive and lighter in pressure, have been well received and have high-fidelity reproducing characteristics on records that have grooves in which the sapphire fits and that are recorded without distortion. The pick-ups are recommended only when equally good high-fidelity equipment is used throughout including motor, turntable, amplifier and speaker.

The *Astatic* company has recently announced their FP-18 and FP-38 models, which have a permanent sapphire stylus of one ounce pressure. It has been advertised extensively. The stylus is provided with a guard mechanism to minimize damage to

the sapphire. Both models are available at less than \$10, the first having a range up to 7,000 cycles per second and the second having a range up to 10,000 cycles per second.

The lightness in stylus pressure is attained not by counterbalancing with a weight on the rear end of the pick-up arm, but rather by means of a spring which urges the front end of the pick-up upward, thus absorbing a part of the weight and lowering the resultant pressure. In principle, this is good design since it lowers the total mass of the pick-up arm which must be raised and lowered if the turntable is not exactly level or if the record is warped. In this connection, it must be remembered that even though the pressure of the stylus on the record is light, the total mass of the arm (including the weight of the pick-up head and the counterbalancing weight) must be moved up and down if the turntable is not level or if the record is warped. This movement causes a change in stylus pressure which may amount to a large proportion of the total stylus pressure, particularly if that pressure is low. Such periodic changes often result in a change of intensity of sound sometimes mistaken for "wows" or changes in pitch.

These pick-ups have been well received and were mentioned by Mr. Lanier last month. The model having a range to 7,000 cycles is recommended (unless the receiver has means for electrically cutting off frequencies at about 6,000 or 7,000) since many records have nothing above this unless it is distortion or scratch.

The *Astatic* company also has a needle changing model (FL-58) identical with those described above except that it has response to 6,500 cycles and a pressure of two ounces. Their catalogue states that this is the "lightest moving system possible with replaceable needles". They should add, "in this price range".

The *Philco* pick-up that achieved lightness (about one ounce) through using a photo-electric principle was described in the July, 1940 issue of this magazine. Contrary to the impression that may be given by *Philco* advertising, this pick-up has a permanent sapphire stylus which rides in the record grooves just as any other pick-

4. Emphasis is placed on price range because there are higher priced pick-ups of low pressure using a steel needle, as will be mentioned later.

up does. This, however, is not a high-fidelity pick-up and is therefore out of the picture. The elimination of scratch, which is greatly stressed by the manufacturer, is believed to be accomplished largely by the sacrifice of high frequencies rather than by the low pressure of the pick-up. A recent test shows it reproduces little beyond 4,000 cycles per second. Furthermore, it is only available in combination with Philco radios and is not sold for separate installation or for replacement purposes.

The Garrard Company, which is supplying a great many of the record changers in the models of various manufacturers, has offered two models, one an automatic changer and the other a manual record player, having a one ounce permanent sapphire stylus pick-up. This is advertised as having a frequency up to 8,500 cycles per second. The writer was advised by a local distributor that the pick-up is made for Garrard by the Webster Electric Company and assembled by Garrard in this country, the other portions of the player being made in England.

The Audak Company, which makes only magnetic pick-ups, has also improved considerably during the last year in lightening the pressure in the needle and lowering the damping, particularly in its more expensive models. This apparently has been achieved by improvement in design and without necessarily resorting to the permanent sapphire needle. Audak makes models having a permanent sapphire as well as changeable needles but they recommend the later. Its engineers feel that present commercial records were expressly designed for use with steel needles and that the abrasive deliberately put into records for the purpose of shaping the needle is a factor that cannot be ignored. With respect to the frequency response and stylus pressure of the Audak models, the model (D27E) in a price range of the Astatic models has a pressure of one and three-quarters ounces and a response to 6,600 cycles. The more expensive model (D36E) has a response to 7,500 cycles and is somewhat lighter (about one and three-eighths ounces) but it is in the \$25 to \$50 price range. The professional models have less than an ounce pressure but are much more

expensive, and are not believed to be suitable for use in the average household. While the Audak models having a stylus and pressure frequency response comparable to those already mentioned are somewhat more expensive, the ability to use any needle is believed to be an advantage, particularly for the experimentally minded and for those like the writer who believe that there are occasions when improved results (particularly from old, worn or defective records) can be obtained with a fiber needle, such as the BCN Emerald.

With so many manufacturers emphasizing lightening in stylus pressure, it seems that the day may not be far off when this will be a uniform feature<sup>5</sup>. It may also have an effect on record manufacture, since lower stylus pressure will permit the use of a better or more delicate grade of surface material for the records which will give quieter surfaces with less abrasive. As the Audak engineers point out, this will present a different picture and perhaps warrant different conclusions. That some work is already being done in this field is indicated by the fact that several patents have been issued in the last year to one of the big manufacturers (RCA-Victor) covering new fillers for records that are claimed to give quieter surfaces.

5. RCA-Victor has been consistently lightening the weight of its pick-ups for several years now. As a matter of fact, the pick-ups on this year's instruments are approximately a half ounce lighter than those of last year. The higher priced instruments naturally have features along these lines superior to the lower priced ones. But the current models are still quite heavy.

## Overtones

THE deaths of Sir Hamilton Harty and Frank Bridge in the past two months removed from the English scene two highly accomplished musicians. Harty will be remembered by many American record buyers for his distinguished performances of works by Berlioz, Schubert, Handel and Mozart in the Columbia catalogue; and more recently by his renditions on English Decca of William Walton's Symphony and a charming orchestral suite from Handel, arranged by himself. Although the musical

world remembers Harty mostly as a conductor, he was a talented composer also, but although several recordings of his own compositions were released in England, none of importance were issued here.

Frank Bridge was a highly gifted chamber-music composer. It seems strange, considering the great respect that musicians have for Bridge's quartets, that none are available on records. In the domestic catalogues he is represented only by two songs, *Love Went A-Riding* and *Isobel*.

Recently Mr. Edward Wallerstein, president of Columbia Recording Corporation, announced that Columbia's next major move "is in the operatic field, where we have just signed contracts with some of the country's leading concert and operatic talent. In a short time we expect to have a catalogue of opera and concert repertoire that will equal the quality of our symphonic library." Among new singers added to the Columbia roster are Risé Stevens, mezzo-soprano; Jan Kiepura, tenor; Robert Weede, baritone; Rene Maison, tenor; Bidu Sayao, soprano; and Salvatore Baccaloni, basso buffo. Baccaloni, called the "find" of the recent Metropolitan season, has recorded several operatic works accompanied by an orchestra under the direction of Erich Leinsdorf, the Wagnerian conductor at the Met. These recordings, as well as others by Lotte Lehmann, Risé Stevens, Maison and Weede will be released shortly.

The highlights in record releases in England during March were all American recordings. Thus we find H.M.V. putting out the Philadelphia Orchestra recording of Rachmaninoff's *Third Symphony*, and the Budapest String Quartet recording of Bartok's *Quartet No. 2*. English Columbia lists the Andre Kostelanetz record of Debussy's *Clair de lune* and Ravel's *Pavane*, and the Weingartner recording of Ballet Music from Handel's *Alcina*, which has already been brought forward here. The following new material appeared:

**FOLK SONGS** (Irish): *Open the Door Softly* and *The Little Boats* (arr. Hughes) and *Eileen Oge* (Collisson); Barbara Mullen with Gerald Moore at the piano. H.M.V. B9148.

**MENDELSSOHN** (arr. Segovia): *Canzonetta*; and **CASTELNUOVO-TEDESCO**: *Vivo e energico*; Andres Segovia (guitar). H.M.V. DB3243.

**MOUSSORGSKY**: *After the Battle*; and **RICHARD**: *David of the White Rock*; Paul Robeson with Lawrence Brown at the piano. HMV. B9149.

**MOZART**: *Trio No. 7 in E flat*, K. 498; Louis Kentner (piano), Reginald Kell (clarinet), and Frederick Riddle (viola). Columbia DX998-1000.

**RAVEL**: *Jeux d'eau*; and **CHOPIN**: *Etude in E major*, Op. 10, No. 3; Eileen Joyce. Columbia DX1002.

**SARASATE**: *Introduction and Tarantelle*, Op. 43, and *Habancera*, Op. 21, No. 2; Ruggiero Ricci. H.M.V. DB4598.

**TARREGA**: *Study in A major*; and **BACH**: *Prelude*; Andres Segovia. H.M.V. DA1553.

**WEISS** *Suite in A major*; Andres Segovia. H.M.V. DA1225.

#### Recent German Records

**BACH**: *Zweiter Teil der Klavierübung*; Fritz Heitman playing on the old organ of Charlottenburg. SK3114/19.

**BRAHMS**: *Symphony No. 3*, Op. 90; Hamburg Philharmonic Orchestra, dir. Eugen Jochum. SK3024/27.

**BRUCKNER**: *Symphony No. 4 (Romantic)* (Original Edition). SK3032/39.

**BRUCKNER**: *Symphony No. 8* (Original Edition). SK3102/11. Both played by Eugen Jochum and Hamburg Phil. Orch.

**BRUCKNER**: *Symphony No. 7*; Eugen Jochum and Vienna Phil. Orch. SK-3000/07.

**DONIZETTI**: *The Daughter of the Regiment — Overture*; Berlin State Opera Orch., dir. Walter Lutz. E3022.

**DVORAK**: *Piano Concerto in G minor*, Op. 33; Willy Stech and Berlin Phil. Orch., dir. Schmitt-Isserstedt. E31-66/69.

**RAVEL**: *Rapsodie espagnole*; Berlin Phil. Orch. E2987/88.

**SCHUBERT**: *Rosamunde Overture*; Concertgebouw Orch., dir. Willem Mengelberg. SK3008.

**STRAVINSKY**: *Concerto in E flat*, for chamber orch.; Hamburg State Opera

## Collector's Corner

WAGNER: *Lohengrin*—*Mein Herr und König* (Act 3); sung by Jean de Reszke with Metropolitan Opera Chorus, and MEYERBEER: *L'Africaine*—*O paradis* (two parts) and Act 4—*Duet* (two parts); sung by Lucienne Breval and Jean de Reszke. IRCC 12-inch disc, No. 183, price \$2.00.

PUCCINI: *Tosca*—*Ab! mostro, lo strazi, and Vittoria! Vittoria!*; sung by Emma Eames, Emilio de Marchi, and Antonio Scotti. IRCC 10-inch disc, No. 179, price \$1.50.

▲ The story of how the late Colonel Lionel Mapleson in the early 1900s dragged an Edison cylinder recording machine into the prompter's box and later into the wings above the stage of the Metropolitan Opera House and proceeded to make recordings of parts of operas has been previously told. Whether or not Mapleson had any idea that he was accomplishing something which might later be of historical value, we cannot say. For a great many years his wax cylinders remained untouched. Unfortunately the recording machine he used was not free from mechanical noise, and so we have in the cylinders, besides some interesting snatches of song from the Golden Age of opera at the Metropolitan, the grind of the motor that governed the machine as well as the surface sound of the wax hard and dried after so many years. The International Record Collector's Club has recently issued the above re-recordings of two important Mapleson cylinders. Although the Club modestly says that one of these, the de Reszke-Breval, "is issued as an historical document only and not as a record of first musical importance", we are inclined to feel that it is both of historical and musical importance. Indeed, despite the terrific roar of the surface and motor noises, one gains a clear impression of the superb musicianship and vocal accomplishments of both Jean de Reszke and Lucienne Breval. It is amazing to hear the high tones of Breval and also somewhat thrilling. Perhaps it is partly the imagination of the musician who can hear

further, who can supply a little of what is not here, which made these discs such an interesting experience to me. How often we might care to hear them is problematical. The selection from *Lohengrin* begins in the middle of the second bar of the men's chorus on page 305 of the Schirmer score, continues to next to the last bar on page 307, skips to the middle of the fourth bar on line two of page 310 and ends just before the opening theme of Lohengrin's *Narrative*. The voice of Jean de Reszke is weakly recorded but clearly audible. Incidentally, this recording was taken at de Reszke's last appearance at the Metropolitan, on March 29, 1901. The part of the King, sung by Edouard de Reszke, is less distinguishable than that of Lohengrin.

The selections from *Tosca*, also taken from Mapleson cylinders made at a performance on January 3, 1903, are equally as interesting; for here the superb artistic intensity and patrician style of the noted soprano Emma Eames is thrillingly conveyed. It is rather fortunate that Mapleson caught two melodramatic moments with such artists as Eames and Scotti in their prime, for one is able to gather how both artists handled these parts. De Marchi is good here, but hardly the equal of the other two singers. There is considerable surface noise on this disc but not as much as on the de Reszke.

MEYERBEER: *L'Africaine* — *O paradis*; and VERDI: *Otello*—*Ora e per sempre addio*; sung by Albert Alvarez. IRCC 10-inch disc 178, price \$1.50.

▲ Alvarez, according to an old timer I know, was a most uneven singer, who could only boast of his high voice. Certainly, judging from these recordings which were made in Paris in 1904, he was a most uneven vocalist. But he had high tones, although one could imagine he was not always comfortable in his middle register. His vowels are badly focused in the *O paradis* and his French is not too good. He does much better in the aria from *Otello*, a role in which he is said to have been highly successful in his time. The re-recording job, from hill and dale discs, has been well done here, and the surfaces are on the whole quite good.



Mr. Kipnis studying a song with accompanist Celius Dougherty.



## Kipnis Sings Brahms

**BRAHMS:** *Songs, Vol. 2: In stiller Nacht* (*Deutsche Volkslieder*, No. 42); *Mein Mädel hat einen Rosenmund* (*Deutsche Volkslieder*, No. 25); *Sandmännchen* (*Volkskinderlieder*, No. 4) (disc 17744); *Vor dem Fenster*, Op. 14, No. 1; *Rube, Süßliebchen*, Op. 33, No. 9 (disc 17745); *Der Gang zum Liebchen*, Op. 48, No. 1; *O kübler Wald*, Op. 72, No. 3; *Dein blaues Auge*, Op. 59, No. 8; *Meine Liebe ist grün*, Op. 63, No. 5 (disc 17746); *Geheimnis*, Op. 71, No. 3; *Am Sonntag Morgen*, Op. 49, No. 1; *Im Waldescinsamkeit*, Op. 85, No. 6 (disc 17747); *Wir wandelten*, Op. 96, No. 2; *Wie Melodien zieht es mir*, Op. 105, No. 1; *Wiegenlied*, Op. 49, No. 4 (disc 17748); *Auf dem Kirchbofe*, Op. 105, No. 4; *Der Überläufer*, Op. 48, No. 2; *Ein Wanderer*, Op. 106, No. 5 (disc 17749); sung by Alexander Kipnis, basso, with piano accompaniment by Ernst Victor Wolff. Victor set M-751, price \$6.50.

**J**OHANNES BRAHMS was a universal musician. That is to say he composed in nearly all of the important musical

forms (opera is the one notable exception) and he enriched every form he touched. He touched the song with a particular affection, for here was a kind of music to which he could impart that intimacy and emotional richness so characteristic of his best music, and give free rein to these folksong elements which became the very head and cornerstone of his intensely German style. Every melody he ever wrote had its roots in the simple songs of his people, and in his own highly artistic *lieder* he inclined to favor the strophic form of folksong.

The quality of universality was both the strength and the weakness of Brahms as a song writer. The song is actually not a purely musical form, but a composite of poetry and music. That Brahms realized this is evident from some of his more declamatory *lieder*, but he did not have that unerring understanding of the problem which accounts for the greatness of Hugo Wolf. The forms of his songs are always musical forms—if the poem he was setting did not naturally fit, he was not above altering it for his purposes. He was less

flagrantly guilty of word changes than either Schubert or Schumann, but his standard of prosody was perhaps less high than theirs. Within the confines of the forms he used he succeeded in getting considerable variety—he could write a dramatic ballad after the manner of Loewe with a strong folksong feeling (*Verrat*), a short *szena* of truly Wolfian poignancy (*Nicht mehr zu dir zu geben*), or, as a compliment to a lady who had sung him a Viennese waltz, the most charming of cradle songs in which the waltz melody is woven into the accompaniment (*Wiegenlied*). He was fond of quoting from his own music, and it is always with a thrill of pleasure that we recognize a snatch of one of the songs in a concerto or a violin sonata. Melody, German melody, is the essence of Brahms. A friend of mine delights in pointing out that many of the songs could be played perfectly well on a violin or a cello, so much more important is the musical line than the words that inspired it. In some cases this is true: in others — like *Wie Melodien*—the sacrifice would be a really serious one. In his treatment of the strophic form he was less happy than Robert Franz in altering the repeated melody to suit the words of the later stanzas. But even in the famous *Minnelied*, in which only the last stanza is really well set, we would not willingly forego the poetry. Brahms was certainly not indifferent to it: he was simply too much the musician to comprehend fully the demands it made upon him.

The *Brahms Song Society*, whose first volume was issued in England some four or five years ago, and subsequently released in this country by Victor, was not a necessity as was the *Hugo Wolf Society*, since the best known Brahms songs have never been neglected either in the recording studio or in the concert hall. And in neither of the albums issued so far has the selection of songs ranged far from the more celebrated Brahms lieder. Out of the thirty-two songs included only seven had not been otherwise available, and about half are represented in the domestic catalogues. Since only one singer has as yet appeared under the Society's auspices it seems fair to conclude that the object is to present not

simply the songs of Brahms, but rather the Kipnis interpretations of these songs. No one singer could, I believe, sing all of Brahms satisfactorily—the gap between the very masculine *Verrat* and the equally feminine *Wiegenlied* is a tremendous one. Mr. Kipnis has now sung both of these songs for us, however, and so we may conclude that nothing in Brahms will intimidate him. Personally I doubt if I can ever bring myself to accept a bass voice in the *Wiegenlied* or in *Sandmännchen*.

There can be no possible doubt that Kipnis is one of the most generously gifted singers before the public today. The sheer sound of his voice is so glorious that I am sure most listeners will be willing to accept his singing without any question. In a sense, however, the very glory of the sound he makes is the greatest obstacle in the way of his complete success as a lieder singer. That is especially so in recordings, since his voice reproduces so richly that the matter of balance with even the most full-blooded accompaniment becomes a real problem. I say this with the memory of a recent recital fresh in my mind. Not only the voice itself, but the mannerisms of the singer's style are magnified in recording. In a personal appearance we hardly notice his occasional lapses into nasal tone or his habit of aspiring when he sings a run on a sustained vowel. In recordings these are genuine blemishes—though it should be said that they are less frequent in this set than in some of his earlier efforts. Kipnis is not a subtle singer—he knows little of the art of the *discreet*, which is so necessary a part of top-flight lieder singing. He is at his best in dramatic song: in lyric music he is inclined to be heavy and rhythmically a bit sluggish. He has a true understanding of the songs he sings, but his German diction is often careless: he is very definitely musical, yet he never lifts us by his treatment of a musical phrase. But when all this is said, the fact remains that he sounds magnificent, and so he is bound to give pleasure. Add to this the fact that he has chosen great music to sing, and the album should meet with a warm welcome. Ernst Victor Wolff provides excellent accompaniments, although as hinted above he is at a disadvantage in the recording.

The most successful performance in the set is, to my mind at least, *Auf dem Kirchbofe*—a very definite improvement on the singer's aging Columbia record of it. O Kübler Wald is also very good, vocally far better than the performance of Karl Erb (Victor 4403) though not quite as satisfying in style. In stiller Nacht (one of the loveliest of melodies) had more poise in Gerhardt's performance (HMV DA 770) and Vor dem Fenster had more lilt as done by the same lady on the other side of the same disc. I don't think any of the singers who have tackled *Mein Mädel hat einen Rosenmund* (Lotte Lehmann, Ernst Wolff, Gerhardt, etc.) have got quite to the bottom of its problems: the tendency is to be cute rather than hearty. Kipnis is no exception. *Sandmännchen* and the *Wiegenlied* come much better from Elisabeth Schumann (Victor 1838 and 1756) although the soprano is guilty of a word slip in the former. *Ruhe, Süßliebchen* finds Kipnis much too heavy, though the line of the song is here better sustained than on the Onegin disc (Victor 7402). After an uncertain start *Der Gang zum Liebchen* is done with good spirit, and *Dein blaues Auge* comes off more satisfactorily here than in Marian Anderson's orchestrally accompanied recording (Victor 15409). *Meine Liebe ist grün* is better done by Kipnis than by Lehmann (Victor 1733) but not so well as by Patzak (Polydor 25014). *Geheimnis*, a first recording, is one of the best things in the set, though the contrasts are a bit overdone—which same remarks apply to *Am Sonntag Morgen*. *Im Waldeseinsamkeit*—another first, and a heavenly song—suffers from a rather prosaic approach, and *Wir wandelten* could stand greater intimacy. *Wie Melodien zieht es mir* is lovely despite some heavy breathing and not quite sufficiently molded line. *Der Überläufer* is the least familiar song in the set, very folksy in character, and done here a little too dramatically. *Ein Wanderer* is very good, but this moving song (somewhat reminiscent of Schubert's *Winterreise*) was given a more searching performance on an old electric recording by Karin Branzell (Parlophone 9614).

—P. M.

## Music on the High Seas

*Record enthusiasts are not all landlubbers. We feel certain that the following letter, from a Lieutenant Commander in the U. S. Navy, will interest our readers. For obvious reasons, and at the request of the writer, his identity has been withheld. Editor.*

THANK you very much for your kindness in so promptly sending me the back copies of your excellent magazine. As an old subscriber I should not like to miss a single copy. You see, I regard it as by far the best and most objective guide to recorded music. In your letter, in which you so kindly answered my inquiries, you asked a few questions as to my job, so here are a few answers and a bit of history and background. It may interest you to know how music is appreciated by one in my field . . . I am, as you know, a Lieutenant Commander in the Navy, having graduated from the Naval Academy in 1922, and am now in command of this Destroyer which is one of the thirteen in the Asiatic Fleet with headquarters in Manila. The ship itself has a nominal displacement of 1200 tons. She carries a complement of six officers and about one hundred and thirty men, and is armed with twelve torpedo tubes, four four-inch guns and an anti-aircraft battery and has a speed in excess of thirty knots. The normal tour of duty for officers on this station is two and a half years and, until this past fall, the families of officers and enlisted men normally lived in Manila for that period, with periodic trips up to China to escape the worst of the hot wet summer months. However, last October, just as I arrived on the station, orders were issued that all families of Naval personnel be sent back to the United States. Consequently, we are now temporarily bachelors . . .

Of all my household goods, the only things I shipped to the Orient from my former station in the States were my phonograph and my collection of records. You, I believe, can well appreciate how much it means to me to have available aboard

ship the music I like. The sources of recreation are quite limited; golf, tennis and cocktail parties are always available anywhere on shore, but the possibilities of normal social contacts are now few. I consider myself very lucky to have a deep-rooted interest in music, and in addition to the immediate pleasure and recreation furnished by it, it has already led to several very interesting civilian contacts ashore.

In the Navy, we cannot afford to get excited or stay stimulated about the dangers of war. We have a lot of work to do to be always ready for any eventuality, but if we allow ourselves to think exclusively of what may happen we should all soon be nervous wrecks. We have got to be cool, efficient, and cold-blooded workmen, take what comes, and like it. But we must be mentally and physically prepared to fight instantly, especially on this station. To do this we must stay relaxed. With me, that's where music comes in most helpfully.

My whole family have always had an interest in and a knowledge of good music. I, although untrained, have been brought up and have lived in an atmosphere where music was appreciated and discussed. About ten years ago I started following closely the music criticisms of Lawrence Gilman, who happened to be my second cousin. He spoke favorably of your work on more than one occasion. While in New York, I was frequently able to hear the New York Philharmonic under Toscanini and others, and from time to time heard all the better American symphony orchestras. A man in my position, changing stations, can, if he is interested, hear a lot of things a person who's stationary might not get to hear. For many years I wanted to get a good phonograph but I never found one at a reasonable price that gave the quality of reproduction that I wanted. Finally, in 1938, I purchased a Magnavox Symphony and started a library of records covering a rather wide range of instrumental selections. I put all the money I could afford into it initially, and then continued building slowly. I discovered *The American Music Lover* almost immediately and

promptly subscribed, and since then have been guided in my selections almost exclusively by your record reviews (by all means continue their style and content—they're invaluable). I have yet to purchase a record recommended by you which has not been a source of keen delight. Naturally, as I heard more and more, my taste developed in ways that I did not anticipate. Bach, Brahms, and Haydn have especially appealed to me as I progressed. I have always liked Beethoven, Wagner and Schubert. Tschaikowsky has palled somewhat, although his *Fifth Symphony* and *Romeo and Juliet* are still treasured. Chamber music has begun to fascinate me. I still like Liszt, Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakoff in small doses. Debussy also is a "mild" friend, especially on the piano. I have always been fond of Chopin. Opera, as a whole, is a fantastic absurdity to me, but has parts of extreme beauty . . . Wagnerian opera is something else; eventually I may grasp its full sweep; at present I like many parts of it.

It may interest you to know that the Manila Symphony Orchestra has an all-Filipino membership of about 88, under the very competent direction of Herbert Zipper, aged 37. He is an Austrian refugee, who is said to have worked with Toscanini. He was released from a concentration camp about two years ago through efforts of Manila friends of his wife. The orchestra plays well, about on a par with lesser orchestras in the U. S. A. Zipper is doing wonders with the musicians; he is thoroughly schooled and educated, unaffected and devoted to the truth of musicianship—a man to mark down in your book, for I think you may well hear more of him.

By way of completing this document, let me tell you something about music on the high seas. Among the requirements of a satisfactory phonograph for a ship of this kind is that it be strong enough to stand the shock of your own gunfire, otherwise it may be wrecked at the first target practise—to say nothing of what would happen in battle. Salt spray corrosion is also present, not to mention that everything must be bolted to the deck for security in rough weather . . . Such is the life of a music lover in the Navy.

## Record Notes and Reviews

*It is the purpose of this department to review monthly all worthwhile recordings. If at any time we happen to omit a record in which the reader is particularly interested, we shall be glad to give our opinion of the recording on written request. Correspondents are requested to enclose self-addressed stamped envelopes.*

### Orchestra

**BEETHOVEN:** *Symphony No. 3 in E flat major, Op. 55 (Eroica)*; played by the NBC Symphony Orchestra, direction Arturo Toscanini. Victor set M-765, 13 sides, price \$7.00.

▲ This is by no means the perfect recording product that the Brahms *Second Piano Concerto* was last month. And yet it is equally as exciting and compelling; for Toscanini make this even more familiar music a most vital and illuminating experience. One may have heard the *Eroica* *Symphony* under many conductors, from orchestras of superlative standards, yet I do not believe that one will ever feel that it has been more thrillingly performed. The recording, made at a broadcast, has its disturbing elements—the breaks are badly devised, some actually cutting off the beat at the beginning of a melody—yet it remains in essence what Toscanini achieves with the music between them that counts. One wishes that some of the breaks were not followed by long waits—this is most disturbing to the flow of the music, especially in the rapid passages of the finale—but once the playing is resumed one is caught under the power of the conductor's technical mastery.

The recording here, although not as sonorous or spacious as in Brahms' concerto of last month, is less harsh and less wanting in room resonance than in previous ones made in Studio 8-H. This is due in part, we are told, to the fact that the broadcasts are rounded out and given added tonal resonance by special tubes in the radio equipment.

Toscanini's performance of the *Eroica* has long commanded the highest respect and enthusiasm of musicians and laymen alike. No one achieves the almost vehem-

ent energy, the majestic sweep, that he does in the opening movement; indeed few approach, much less equal, his intensity and passion in the entire score. The perfect blend of suavity and strength he achieves in the second movement is not to be described in words. One feels that even those rare souls who would contend that they have become surfeited with this work will find, on hearing this performance, that nothing, after all, in it is outworn. I have always felt like a heretic in the past when I have said I did not like the *Marcia funebre*, and indeed not a few musician friends have made me feel that I was. But after hearing Toscanini play it, and now through the records having heard his reading in the home, I feel that I have experienced a new musical orientation. I now begin to understand why the late Lawrence Gilman wrote pages in his *Toscanini and Great Music* on this very subject, why he found that in the closing page of this dirge "the music speaks with so fathomless a tenderness of human loss and suffering". But the interpretative miracle does not stop here; it continues, and what has been termed unreined joyous elation is fully conveyed in the brilliant reading of the finale.

There will be other performances of the *Eroica* which will probably incite critical encomiums. Indeed, one is promised by Columbia in the near future made by Bruno Walter and the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York. As though realizing the full importance of the Toscanini set, Columbia has forwarded to reviewers a specially pressed disc of one side from the first movement and another from the adagio of the Walter performance. The recording, on the evidence of these two sides, would seem more spacious, more resonant than the Toscanini, and the

breaks more judiciously arranged. It may be that this will prove one of the most compelling things Walter has accomplished for the phonograph, and yet, remembering the Toscanini performance in its total effect, I doubt that many who will hear it will be able to erase it entirely from their consciousness.

—P. H. R.

**BRAHMS:** *Symphony No. 3 in F major*, Op. 90; played by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, direction Frederick Stock. Columbia set M-443, four discs, price \$4.50.

▲ The symphonies of Brahms, it is said, have always held a warm place in the heart of Mr. Stock. This is not surprising; Stock began his conducting work around the turn of the century, when the symphonies of Brahms were regarded as "modern music" and highly controversial material. The present recording reveals a warmly human and affectionate approach to the music of the *Third Symphony*; Mr. Stock quite evidently has a fondness for the melodies of this work and he reveals them to us as old friends. But the conductor's depth of insight into this score may well be a subject for considerable controversy, for he by no means probes the depths fully or realizes the vigor and force of the two outer movements. In the opening allegro con brio one feels that the conductor has a prohibitionist attitude toward the "con brio", for this movement is not given the sweep or impetus usually associated with it. Nor does he convey the full spaciousness or power of the finale. If one admits that the poetic inner movements are nostalgic in mood (not all conductors do), one will find Stock's playing of them gratifying. Yet, the nostalgic quality should not extend itself to the strong outer movements; they require, in our opinion, more bite. Perhaps the conductor strongly feels the romanticism in Brahms, and accordingly bases his entire interpretation of this quality.

Comparison where recording is concerned is unavoidable. In February, 1939, Columbia issued a recording of this work by Felix Weingartner and the London Philharmonic Orchestra (set M-353), and in June, 1937, Victor issued one by Bruno Walter and the Vienna Philharmonic Or-

chestra (set M-341). Comparing these two sets, movement for movement, recording for recording, with the Stock set, we find the depth of insight more saliently voiced in both of the older ones. Despite the reverberation in the Walter set, which is not disturbing to us, we find his reading the best of the three. Indeed, it is the finest of all the Brahms sets he has made. All of which is not by way of disparaging the work of either Mr. Weingartner or Mr. Stock; for both have their undeniable merits. Both as a recording and as a performance the Weingartner set seems to us more impelling than the Stock.

As a recording, this new set is a vast improvement on the type of orchestral reproduction we have been getting from Columbia of late. It is full and rich, and well balanced, although not all of the linear texture is as clear as it might be. We have spoken of the opportunities which Brahms provided for some lovely woodwind playing in the andante. The rich blending of the instrumental choirs is less bright here than in the Weingartner set; the Chicago Symphony has an unusually darkly colored woodwind section. It will be well for a prospective buyer to hear the three sets of the *Third Symphony* mentioned before purchasing; it is quite an experience in the varying ways of music making of three eminent conductors.

—P. H. R.

**DEBUSSY:** *First Rhapsody for Clarinet*; played by Benny Goodman and the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York, direction of John Barbirolli. Columbia disc 11517-D, price \$1.00.

▲ Debussy had a natural predilection for the woodwinds and his writing in this piece shows perception and sympathy. Originally it was composed for clarinet and piano, but later the composer orchestrated it, supplying some ingenious and piquant instrumental effects which are brought out here for the first time on records. The *Rapsodie* was intended as a test piece for students in the clarinet competitions at the Paris Conservatoire; and was supposed to be used for sight-reading purposes. It was written in 1909-10. The work is somewhat amorphous, and reminiscent of the earlier *L'Après Midi*.



Benny Goodman, going "long hair", as his jazz admirers would say, proves himself to be a first-rate concert clarinetist. His tone is smooth, clear and silvery and his playing shows a true understanding and regard for the music's style. Barbirolli in the role of an accompanying conductor does full justice to the orchestral background; and the recording is better accomplished than previous ones by this orchestra.

—P. G.

#### THE MUSIC OF STEPHEN FOSTER:

*Old Black Joe*; and *Oh! Susanna*; *My Old Kentucky Home* (disc 7371-M); *Beautiful Dreamer*; and *Massa's in de Cold, Cold, Ground*; *Come Where My Love Lies Dreaming* (disc 7372-M); *I Dream of Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair*; and *My Old Kentucky Home*; *Camptown Races* (disc 7373-M); played by André Kostelanetz and his Orchestra. Columbia set M-442, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ These are ultra-smooth arrangements, sophisticated and sentimental by turns and brilliantly recorded. Kostelanetz is a past master at this sort of thing, of course; and, since he has selected the most popular of the Foster creations, this album is sure to be popular. Southerners especially will like it, even though it is the product of a damyankee. The esthetic value of the arrangements is something else.

—H. C. S.

GLINKA: *Ruslan and Ludmilla—Overture*; and RIMSKY-KORSAKOW: *Dubninskka*; played by the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, direction Fabien Sevitzky. Victor disc 17731, price \$1.00.

▲ Even if you own the Fiedler-Boston "Pops" recording of the gay and sprightly Glinka overture, this disc is still worth having for the rousing *Dubninskka*. The latter is a Russian folksong, arranged by Rimsky-Korsakow.

This is the sort of music that should be in everyone's record library; eye-openers for the evening when you have that dull let-down feeling immediately after dinner. They start off an evening concert with the right flourish. And again, these bright, down to earth selections do well for encores, if one's been listening to music that

has left one temporarily suspended on a cloud.

—P. G.

GRETRY: *Pantomime*; and *March de la Caravanne* and *Tambourin* from the opera *Denys le tyran*; played by the Philadelphia Chamber String Orchestra, direction of Fabien Sevitzky. Victor disc 13590, price \$1.50.

▲ Gretry was a highly successful composer of operas. His vogue extended from 1765 through the French Revolution, and his music displays diverting invention and melodic gifts. The present selections are quite in the mood of their day—which was the time of Mozart and Haydn. These are not the most interesting recorded excerpts from Gretry's works, but they are attractive acquisitions. A little clearer-cut style of performance would have helped make this music even more enjoyable than it is. The recording is quite satisfactory.

—P. G.

MCDONALD: *Symphony No. 1 — The Santa Fe Trail*; played by the Philadelphia Orchestra, direction of Eugene Ormandy. Victor set M-754, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ It is of interest to make a comparison between this music and the Quintet of Roy Harris, which is also made available in a recording this month. Both composers were born in the West, and both have a strong feeling for the pioneer traditions of their respective States. Harris comes from Oklahoma, and in all of his music there is a strong intimation of the influence of his hard working forebears. McDonald was born in Colorado on a cattle ranch, where, he tells us, he was profoundly affected by tales of the early days told by the settlers, and it is this influence which he seeks to express in the present symphony. No two composers could be more divergent in their respective methods of composing than Harris and McDonald. The former is motivated less by his emotions than his head, whereas the latter quite evidently derives his impulse entirely from his emotions. McDonald's music is healthy, frank, completely objective, and entirely unfettered. He is, as the late W. J. Henderson has said, "as American as Pikes Peak". There is no profundity of impulse in this work, and yet one could not call it

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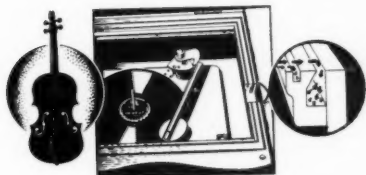


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shallow, for it is the most honest kind of music making. It is easy to listen to, pleasant and often entertaining. Although the composer outlines a program, this does not by any means dominate the work; one can, if one is interested, enjoy this score with no thought of the program that motivated it.

What particularly pleased me about this music was the skillful and colorful scoring. The work is divided into three movements, the first of which is titled, *The Explorers*, the second, *The Spanish Settlements*, and the third, *The Wagon Trails of the Pioneers*. The opening suggests a group of pioneers' reactions to the panorama of dis- from the distance, "one would hardly be conscious that they move at all, so slight is their progress from day to day". The pioneer's reactions to the panorama of distant mountains, their impatience to reach the Spanish settlements, is all told in the music; an exciting climax conveys their feelings when they reach the crest of the first range and see the wonderful view below them. The second movement, having the combined characteristics of a scherzo and a slow movement, is based on Hispanic Jota patterns. It is atmospheric music portraying both a picture and a pattern. The final movement, the composer tells us, is "built on several subjects, and represents the many influences—Hispanic, Nordic, and American Indian—that combined to build the spirit and substance of the Southwest". Here, he says further, he has given more thought "to the sequence of emotional states than to any purely technical devices of structure".

This music recalls in spirit the American opera, *Natoma*, by the late Victor Herbert. Both make good use of Spanish-American material in their scores, and both endeavor to portray the American spirit at a certain period. How well this score will wear one cannot say; it largely depends upon what one seeks in music.

Mr. McDonald is fortunate in having Eugene Ormandy as the interpreter of his symphony, for this conductor performs it with superb brilliance and zest. Like all recent recordings of the Philadelphia Orchestra, this is a realistic achievement in

the reproduction of a great symphony orchestra.  
—P. H. R.

MOZART: *Sinfonia Concertante in E flat major, K. App. No. 9*; played by the Philadelphia Orchestra, direction Leopold Stokowski. Soloists: Marcel Tabuteau (oboe), Bernard Portnoy (clarinet), Sol Schoenbach (bassoon), Mason Jones (horn). Victor set M-760, four discs, price \$4.50.

▲ Mozart was twenty-two years old when he wrote this extraordinary work. It was written for the Concerts spirituel in Paris, the same organization for which he wrote his Paris Symphony, among other compositions. Because of an intrigue directed against this work it was not performed in Paris. One wonders whether the enthusiasm of the four solo players for the work disturbed the reflections of the conductor on the part he would play in its performance. For this *Sinfonia Concertante* is very definitely a concerto for four wind instruments and although one cannot minimize the conductor's part in its performance, it is not unlikely that M. Le Gros, who was a musician of considerable importance, did not wish to share honors with his men in this manner. The story of Le Gros' failure to have the parts copied in time for the performance, a performance which apparently the four soloists had worked for and counted on, is told by the annotator. It is of interest to note that Mozart's letters refer to the solo parts as being for flute, oboe, horn and bassoon; no one seems to know exactly when the present score, which employs the clarinet instead of the flute, was made.\* Mozart's later admiration for the clarinet may have caused him to make the alteration, and as to whether the original score differed from the present, which is the only one in existence, we may never know. But, as the annotator points out, the clarinet part is eminently suited to the capacities of that instrument, so we need not be concerned about the substitution.

This is the second recording of this work, but the first to be issued in this

\*Dr. Alfred Einstein, in his edition of the Koehler catalogue, is of the opinion that the present form of this work can "scarcely be attributed to Mozart himself".

country. English Columbia released a set made by the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, under the direction of Viscount Hide-maro Konoye, the musical brother of the Japanese Prime Minister. There was some talk of issuing this work in this country a couple of years back, but for obvious reasons this was abandoned. The performance, which this reviewer has heard, gave testimony to the conductor's fine musicianship, but in all honesty it was not as expressive as the present one. Stokowski has done few things in the so-called classical school of music which are as consistently admirable as his performance of this work. From the evidence of the recording one gathers the impression that Stokowski regards this composition as a virtuoso concerto, for he gives the four solo instruments more prominence than Konoye did. His pacing of the opening allegro is less rapid than the Japanese conductor's and, in my opinion, all to the good, for the four excellent first-desk men of the Philadelphia Orchestra are able to give cleaner and more concise accounts of the alternating thematic material and especially of the running figurations. There is some beautifully balanced playing from the solo instruments. The conductor obtains a richness and luminosity from the strings which we do not often hear in Mozart; he does not attain, however, the type of polished precision that Toscanini does in his Mozart readings, nor does he get the sparkle of Beecham. Nevertheless, the rather different sort of technical precision that we have come to expect of Stokowski is evidenced at its best here, for the conductor indulges in few vagaries of tempo or phrasing. Indeed the songful characteristics of the score are soundly attested, albeit with some individual treatment of nuance.

Mr. Veinus, the anotator, with his usual discernment points out that this work is "an excellent example of an emphasis upon concise expression balanced by concisely and carefully placed moments of melancholy which . . . from this point on, are never absent in his music." The opening allegro is a striking example of Mozart's ability at an early age to achieve melodic distinction and fine craftsmanship. It is highly interesting for many reasons, not

the least of which is a finely written and wholly revelant cadenza for the solo instruments at the end of the movement. The adagio owns true poetic beauty and offers fine evidence, if evidence were needed, of the fertility of the composer's melodic invention. It moments of poignancy are by no means probed here, since the accent here is more on tonal elegance than on sublimity. The finale, although less persuasive, is nonetheless attractive. It is based on one of those nursery-like melodies which, as one writer has said, Mozart so delighted to honor by constructing on them light-hearted and ingenuous finales.

From the reproductive standpoint this set has been admirably accomplished; from both the tonal and surface aspects all is as it should be.

—P. H. R.

STRAUSS: *Rediscovered Music*, Vol. II—*Motoren Walzer* (disc 71027-D); *Ballg'schichten Walzer* (disc 71028-D); *Telegrafischer Depeschen*; and 1. *Champagner Polka*; 2. *Schnellpost Polka*; played by Howard Barlow and the Columbia Broadcasting Symphony. Columbia set M-445, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ Vol. I of the *Rediscovered Music* was released in December, 1939. The story behind it (and the present set) concerns the tastes of the late Paul Löwenberg, whose love for the music of the Strauss-Lanner period urged him to collect all the sheet music and biographical data available concerning his favorites. His collection passed into the hands of the Library of Congress, where it is at present. At the instigation of Mr. Davidson Taylor of CBS, James H. Fassett went through the collection, selecting from it works most probably never had been played in this country. And here are some of them.

I like the selections in the present set more than those in Vol. 1. Here I find more spontaneity and some melodies that are very close to the more familiar Strauss. The *Motoren Walzer* (*Motor Waltz*) is one of the best. As the title might imply, it was composed for technical students at the Vienna Hochschule. Most of the others were written for special occasions—*Stories of the Ball Waltz* honored a benefit given for the composer, and the *Champagne Polka* received its first performance at a

ball given for the brothers Strauss. The latter is quite pretty; but all are polished, aristocratic and elegant. They are lovingly directed by Barlow, who has been accorded fine recording.

—H. C. S.

WAGNER: *Tannhäuser — Bacchanale (Venusberg Music)*; played by the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, direction of Fritz Reiner. Columbia set X-193, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲ Mr. Reiner has long been admired for his splendid Wagnerian readings. In the past we have heard him conduct Wagnerian performances which have long stood out in our memory. We have been hearing reports for some time of what Mr. Reiner has accomplished with the Pittsburgh Symphony, how he has molded it into a flexible and brilliant ensemble. All this is borne out by this recording.

In February, 1939, Victor released its second recording of Stokowski's celebrated performance of the *Overture* and *Venusberg Music* (set M-530). This has been regarded as one of the finest things that the conductor accomplished for the phonograph. Perhaps the best compliment we can pay Mr. Reiner at the outset is to say that we forgot Mr. Stokowski while we listened to this new recording. It is not that the recording is finer than Stokowski's, for this is not the case, but that Mr. Reiner's reading is equally fine in its way and the reproduction does full justice to it. But the Pittsburgh Symphony is not the Philadelphia Orchestra; there is considerable difference in tonal quality. It may well be that many people will prefer Mr. Reiner's less stylized performance of this music; and again those to whom the overture no longer appeals will naturally prefer this recording of the *Venusberg Music* alone. There is room for more than one performance of music like this, for what appeals to one man may not appeal to another. Stokowski related his performance to the theatre, with the inclusion of the choral parts in the latter part of the score, whereas Reiner's performance is one of the concert hall.

As a recording, this set is excellently contrived, but there is a muddiness in fortissimo passages.

—P. G.

## Chamber Music

BEETHOVEN: *Quartet No. 1 in F major, Op. 18, No. 1*; played by the Budapest String Quartet. Columbia set M-444, four discs, price \$4.50.

▲ Although published as the first of Beethoven's quartets, this is actually the second in order of creation, since No. 3 of the same opus was written before it. Here, as the editor pointed out in his article on the Opus 18 Quartets (August, 1937), we find Beethoven breaking away from past influences, asserting his individuality and his right to leadership. There are some who would have us believe that the opening movement of this work is cut and dried, and that its main interest lies in its inner or development section. Some ensembles fail to achieve the full grace of the opening themes and sufficient warmth of tone, but not so the Budapest group. This is the most persuasive playing of this controversial movement on records to date. Hadow says it is dangerous to lay too much emphasis on Beethoven's assertion to a friend that the glorious adagio was written with the last scene of *Romeo and Juliet* in mind. This lovely music needs no outside associations to make it completely enjoyable to the listener. Those who are familiar with the *D major Quartet* will note the new freedom of expression in the scherzo and the finale, both of which show an emancipation from influences of his forerunners.

It is good to have the Budapest recording of this work, for despite the technical mastery of some previous performances, notably the one made by the Coolidge Quartet, the added tonal glow and expressive subtlety of the Budapests' playing contributes much to the enjoyment of this music. It is rumored that the Budapest group is to record all the Beethoven quartets; this will unquestionably be good news to its many admirers. The fact that the Budapest Quartet takes four discs instead of the three all other groups have found sufficient for this work is somewhat unfortunate. This is an excellent recording job.

—P. G.



HARRIS: *Quintet for Piano and Strings* (1939); played by Johana Harris and the Coolidge String Quartet. Victor set M-752, seven sides, price \$4.00.

▲ Harris once told me: "My musical aims are epic and lyric. The thing I am heading for is classicism brought up to date, in which no one element is emphasized to the detriment of another . . ." I think no work of his realizes part of this aim more fully than his *Piano Quintet*, which I, for one, have always felt should have been scored for piano and orchestra. There is a bigness to this work, an overwhelming strength, and this is so true of the piano part especially that one frequently feels it dominates the strings too much. As for Harris' attempt to be lyric, he has not, in my estimation, a true feeling for

lyricism; his music does not have the rhythmic grace or the expressive graciousness that belong to true lyricism. The one section of his *Third Symphony* which aimed to be lyrical, the Pastoral part, is the weakest in the work. Repeated hearings have failed to convince me differently. Harris has amazing strength, his music is muscular, sinewy, strong, and rough-hewn. "The barbarism or ruggedness of my ancestors undoubtedly placed symmetry in my blood," he has said, and further he tells us that nature "with its constant evolution of eternal life, its regeneration from within itself has had its definite effect on the development of my acceptance and belief in life." One feels the truth of his words in this work. Like Sibelius, he creates as nature does, from within. Both men have



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been stirred by the forces of nature, but psychically the two are far removed from each other.

If we take the dictionary meaning of the word asymmetry, which Harris likes to use in connection with his mode of composition, we can arrive at some understanding of his method of creation. Asymmetry is a want of a due arrangement or balancing of parts or elements. Thus with Harris the prescribed sonata form would not permit an asymmetric expression. Even his use of the classic passacaglia form in the opening movement has not been approached in the same way by Harris as Brahms or Bach approached it. One suspects that Harris can start off with a mere fragment of a theme and develop a large work from it. One also feels that his craftsmanship surmounts his emotions and that the former inevitably builds for expressive strength rather than beauty. There are few spots in Harris' scores where one could say that his emotions betrayed him.

I firmly believe this is the greatest work of Harris on records to date; the opening Passacaglia has been aptly called a work of genius. The Cadenza, which follows, is, according to the composer, "a further variation of the Passacaglia subject, featuring the virtuoso resources of each instrument". And the finale, a triple fugue, is a movement in which "each subject employs the twelve tones of our music system in a tonal style". The whole work is planned to be played without interruption. In a way, this makes it a difficult work for the listener to absorb fully on a first hearing. The growth of the music from the initial material of the opening movement is not immediately perceptible. This is music for the eye as well as the ear and I, for one, found a greater stimulation and enjoyment with the score in hand than I did the first time I heard the composition without it.

Johana Harris and the Coolidge String Quartet do full justice to the technical mastery of the score. The pianist, who is the composer's wife, shows a greater insight into her part than any of the other players, and one feels instinctively that it is her personality which commands the homogeneity of phrasing and style in the performance. The tonal range of the Cool-

idge ensemble is hardly large enough for the fullest realization of the vigor and strength of some of the music (this is particularly noticeable in the fugue), although the musicianship of the ensemble is above quibble. At the time of going to press I hear that Mrs. Harris is playing this work in the Middle West with a large body of strings; this would seem to me the ideal way to perform this music. For Harris' writing for strings is lacking in the essential intimacy and subtlety usually associated with a quartet; it implies orchestral proportions. As a recording this set is well done.

—P. H. R.

#### Keyboard

CHOPIN: *Barcarolle*, Op. 60; played by Walter Gieseking. Columbia disc 71206-D, price \$1.00.

▲ On December 12, 1845, Chopin wrote to his family: "I should like now to finish my *Violoncelle Sonata*, *Barcarolle*, and something else that I don't know how to name . . ." (That "something else" was the *Polonaise-Fantasia*, Op. 61.) On November 19 of the following year he sold the *Barcarolle* to Breitkopf and Härtel. The name of the composition suggests Italy, and some writers have gone to great lengths describing a program; while the great pianist Tausig spoke to Lenz about two lovers in a gondola, etc. None of that need concern us here. Though not one of Chopin's most popular compositions, this is a masterpiece. What need to look for a program when the music speaks so eloquently and arouses such an emotional response in the hearer?

Since there was no example of the work in the domestic catalogues a recording was needed. However, I am sorry that Gieseking was the artist chosen. He plays well—he plays everything well—but he gets little out of the music. The performance is stolid and, for Gieseking, heavy-handed, with little charm and insight. He uses very little rubato, and the interpretation as a whole is too clean-cut to convey the charm of the shifting harmonies. His dynamics here have little of the infinite gradation so necessary, and his approach to the *poco piu mosso* section is far too deliberate. And near the end, where the

music goes back to the first tempo and the right hand carries two voices, he skeletonizes the structure in a woefully intellectual fashion. The playing may be masterful, but it is not Chopinesque. One can cite the last run, which is digitally resplendent but emotionally empty. Everything is too well planned, so that the element of improvisation is lost. It is surprising that Giesecking, who excels in Debussy, is not able to bring more poetry to music as flowing and imaginative as this. —H. C. S.

LISZT: *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 15 (Rakoczy March)*; played by Reginald Stewart, piano. Victor 10-inch disc 4544, price 75c.

▲ First is heard a bit of scurrying introduction, and then comes the theme that everyone will recognize — the *Rakoczy March*, made famous by Berlioz in *The Damnation of Faust*. The latter has far overshadowed the earlier Liszt work (Liszt also made an orchestral arrangement of it), but there is some doubt whether Berlioz was indebted to the pianist's version. The march was common property, "born at the beginning of the nineteenth century in the feverish atmosphere of the Napoleonic wars, under the fingers and bows of gypsy fiddlers" (Emile Haraszti, in the *Musical Quarterly*, April, 1940). Toward the end of 1839 Liszt heard it for the first time, and immediately made a piano arrangement which he played with success on subsequent tours. That was the genesis of the *Rhapsody*. But, according to Haraszti, "the *Rakoczy March* of Berlioz is a work quite independent of Liszt's versions, despite the claims of the great Abbé . . . On the other hand, priority in having developed the march must be accorded to Liszt by virtue of his *Rhapsody*. The harmonic structure of the latter is much richer than that in the version of Berlioz. The Liszt march, like the other *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, represents the perfect fusion of the gypsy type of Hungarian melody with French Romantic piano technique, perfected and recreated by Liszt."

Still, this is not one of the best rhapsodies. It is more pompous than the others, and the orchestral version is always present in one's mind, to the detriment of the

piano piece. Nor is Stewart's the type of vigorous exhibitionism best suited to music of this kind. He is capable of real bravura, but it is of somewhat calculating and restrained kind. Notwithstanding all this, many will like the disc, especially since it is well recorded.

—H. C. S.

MOEDERSPRAAK: *Belgian Mother's Song*; and PURCELL (arr. Archer): *Trumpet Tune and Air*; played by Charles Courboin on the organ of the

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▲ The *Belgian Mother's Song* is used by Courboin as a theme on his radio program. Those who have heard it and expressed an admiration for it will undoubtedly welcome this recording. With this he has coupled a well adapted arrangement of some first-rate tunes by Purcell. Judged by present-day standards, this is good organ recording. —P. G.

PINTO: *Scenas Infantis* (*Memories of Childhood*); played by Guiomar Novaes, piano. Columbia 10-inch disc 17262-D, price 75c.

▲ This little suite is divided into five sections: *Run, Run!; Ring Around the Rosy; March, Little Soldier; Sleeping Time; and Hobby Horse*. Their composer is a well known Brazilian musician who happens to be the husband of Guiomar Novaes. It was not merely conjugal devotion that was responsible for the release: judged on its own merits the music is worth recording, for it is pleasant and diverting. Children will like the selections, and the disc may serve as an entry into more serious fare. Of course, its appeal is not only juvenile; the writing is skilled, the themes are pretty, and there is a naive simplicity about the whole that many will find appealing. Novaes plays in a light, delicate manner perfectly suited for the demands of the music. —H. C. S.

PURCELL: *Suite from Bonduca or The British Heroine*; and COUPERIN: *Soeur Monique*. Disc A-1. VIERNE: *Scherzo from Second Symphony*, Op. 20; and *Toccata*, Op. 53. Disc A-3. All played by Grover J. Oberle on the organ of St. Thomas' Church, New York. Tone-Art Recording Co., Ansonia Hotel, New York, N. Y. Price \$1.50 each.

▲ Here are two unusually good modern organ records made in St. Thomas' Protestant Episcopal Church in New York by the assistant organist in that edifice. The organ is a four manual E. M. Skinner, and is equipped with full orchestral stops.

Mr. Oberle, who is a highly gifted player, selected his material with an eye to avoiding duplication of works already available. The Vierne selections were

chosen because of their popularity with organists. Both are representative of the composer, being brilliantly effective. The *Scherzo* is lightly scored, but the *Toccata* is for full organ, although the deepest pitches in the pedal are not used. The Purcell is arranged from incidental music to a tragedy adapted from Beaumont and Fletcher. I find it less effective than its companion piece, which Mr. Oberle arranged himself. The recording of the Purcell is interesting, however, for it represents a valiant effort on the part of the recorders to convey the tone from a 32 foot stop. On most machines this will be produced, but more as the carry-over or echo of the tone than as the actual sound heard in the church. It occurs in the last chord of the music. Oberle's arrangement of *Soeur Monica* is delightful; he has kept it light and used the pedal discreetly throughout; moreover he has included most of the ornaments indicated in the original. The trouble with most transcriptions, the organist tells us, is the omission of the ornaments, which destroys the character of much music of this kind. As a recording job, these discs are very good, although they are not recorded at as high a level as most are today. —P. H. R.

SAINT-SAËNS: *Scherzo for Two Pianos*, Op. 87; played by Arthur Loesser and Beryl Rubinstein. Columbia disc 70740-D, price \$1.00.

▲ Saint-Saëns had a definite flair for writing scherzos, and in several cases he has given us scintillatingly brilliant pieces of this kind which demand of their performers the utmost in technical ability. Music like this is apt to be more breathtaking when brilliantly and skillfully performed, as it is here, to those who know something about piano technique than to those who have no real idea of how profoundly difficult it is, and what it requires of the players. Musically this piece is highly ingenious, but it's more of a technical show than anything else.

Both Loesser and Rubinstein are veritable whizzes at the keyboard. The former is head of the piano department at the Cleveland Institute of Musical Art, and the latter is director of the institution. Loesser

has already demonstrated his technical accomplishments in the highly difficult *Grand Gigue* of Haessler, which he made a couple of years ago for The Friends of Recorded Music at the same time that he recorded Brahms' *Piano Sonata No. 2*, and two sonatas by Clementi for the same organization.

—P. G.

**SCHUMANN: *Sonata No. 2 in G minor*, Op. 22;** played by Sascha Gorodnitzki, piano. Columbia set X-186, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲ This is the sonata whose tempo indications always have been a cause for amusement among musicians, for the first movement contains the immortal directions *So schnell als möglich* (as fast as possible), later followed by *schneller* (faster), and, at the coda, *noch schneller* (still faster). Some of the amusement is a little unjust, for, as Mr. Barr has pointed out in these pages, the music of the coda is a little easier and can be played faster. There is nothing in the music calculated to bring smiles, however; the sonata is one of those wildly romantic things which are the very essence of Schumann. It is packed full of melody—the slow movement is one of the most beautiful he ever composed—it moves at a fast pace, and underlying all is that ever-present feverish melancholy found in the musician's later period.

Gorodnitzki here makes an auspicious record debut. He plays in a refreshing way. His approach is brilliant and objective, but he manages to convey the romantic flavor by a few well chosen ritards. I don't think that one will find the utmost penetration into the secrets of the music, but the vigor of the performance provides some exciting moments. Gorodnitzki has a big technique, pedals nicely, and is healthy and unaffected. He is weaker in the slow movement, which he plays in a manly fashion but without the requisite tenderness and nostalgia. Another fault is his limited dynamic range. Gorodnitzki's tone does not seem to have much of softness and mellowness; in this recording, at least, his dynamics seem to start from about a mezzo-piano. Perhaps this is due to the recording engineers. The recording is good, however; and both performance and reproduction surpass those of the Lev-

itzki version on Victor discs. I shall look forward with interest to future releases by this young artist.

—H. C. S.

**STRAUSS (arr. Tausig): *Man lebt nur einmal* (One lives but once);** played by Ania Dorfmann, piano. Columbia 10-inch disc 4270-M, price 75c.

▲ Tausig called his arrangements of Strauss waltzes, of which this is one, *Valse caprices*. All should be played more often, for they are pleasant to hear and are gratefully arranged for the piano. Rachmaninoff once recorded the present arrangement for H.M.V., but Miss Dorfmann's disc is, I believe, a first American recording. She plays neatly, is not dismayed by the difficulties, and brings out about everything there is to be brought out. The recording is good.

—H. C. S.

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## THE AMERICAN MUSIC LOVER

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SZYMANOWSKI: *Twelve Etudes*, Op. 33; and *Mazurkas*, Op. 50, Nos. 1 and 2; played by Jakob Gimpel, piano. Columbia set X-189, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲ Despite the fact that he has been called the greatest Polish composer since Chopin, and despite the fact that he has composed much music in many forms, Szymanowski (1883-1937) is virtually unknown in this country. He is represented in the record catalogues only by a few single discs of minor works that, according to scholars, are unrepresentative of his genius. Thus the present set is important, for it will serve to introduce his music to a wide audience.

This reviewer confesses that he knows little of Szymanowski's work, and will need many more hearings before he feels qualified to pass judgment on these *Etudes*. For the music is not easy to understand. The harmonic basis is very original; one notices the influence of other composers, but one is also conscious of force and imagination. At first, the *Etudes* suggest Scriabin; No. 12 recalls the latter's study in C, and the first and fifth bring to mind some of the *Preludes*. But after several hearings, when the ideas of the later composer become more firmly fixed, that influence seems to disappear. Harmonically speaking, Szymanowski is more advanced than Scriabin, though I suppose that analysis would provide a common denominator. As befits a twentieth-century composer (these *Etudes* were composed in 1917) there is a tinkering with polytonality. It must be said, however, that very often the composer achieves wonderful results with his dissonances. He feels the right progressions, and although the dissonances are never resolved according to text books, they melt into beautiful blocks of tone. I am thinking particularly on the second *Etude*, with its alternation of major and diminished seconds. Incidentally, I have a feeling that Paul Hindemith has been influenced by this music.

Of technical innovations there are many. A glance at the music reveals an appalling array of accidentals not exactly conducive to peaceful sight-reading. No key signature is used, which accounts for the super-

fluity of flats, double sharps, etc. As *études*, they carry the technique of Chopin to greater heights, although a pianist will realize how much the modern composer owes to his predecessor.

The two *Mazurkas* are suggestive of Chopin's works in the same form, but with what a difference! There is something wild and feverish about Szymanowski's; the Chopin rhythms are there, and the melodies too; but the rhythms take on a distorted and angular shape, while the melodies slip off into all sorts of tangents. It is rather terrifying to see the transformation of the free-swinging Chopin works into acid and uncompromising sketches. But few will deny their force and imagination, and were Chopin alive today he undoubtedly would be composing music very close to it.

Gimpel, who, I have heard, was a pupil of the composer, turns in a brilliant performance. He does not always play with the greatest clarity, but some of the sections are so difficult that it is a wonder he hits the notes at all. The recording is good, but some of the surfaces of the review set—especially sides 1 and 3—are noisy.

—H. C. S.

#### Violin

PAGANINI: *Fantasia on the G String* (after Rossini's *Moses in Egypt*); played by Yehudi Menuhin, accompanied by Ferguson Webster. Victor disc 17730, price \$1.00.

▲ This is a bit of the forgotten past. Rossini's opera was produced in 1818, and was quite popular in its day. It is now, probably deservedly, forgotten, but it was the source of many other—also forgotten—works. In the 1830s it was the fashion to compose elegant and glittering fantasias and potpourris on themes from popular operas. With the development of the virtuoso and with the impetus supplied by sensation seekers of the French salon, the instrumental potpourri became one of the features of the era. Thalberg, with his sophisticated and titillating arrangements, was the talk of Paris. Liszt, who in his youth had many a pianistic battle with Thalberg, also was forced to compose fantasias. What more natural than that Pag-



anini should do for his instrument what Thalberg did for the piano? *Moses* was one of the most popular operas of the day; had not Thalberg written a work of unparalleled superfluity upon its themes? Very well, said Paganini to himself, here's where I write a fantasia that *is* a fantasia.

So he did, and went Thalberg one innovation better by confining all of his technical lunacy to the straitjacket of the G string. Presumably Thalberg & Co. were properly abashed, as were most violinists who later approached the work. Of the music, of course, little need be said. It is a stunt. It has all kinds of tricky stopping, brilliant passages, a long cantilena, and dizzy finger work. But, as one eminent conductor would say, "Vot means it?"

Menuhin's style has never impressed me as being particularly fit for Paganini. One looks for an objective, cool and brilliant approach; Menuhin has the brilliance but scarcely the objectivity or coolness. Music like this sounds just a little silly when played with the excess of vibrato, sentiment, lushness, and "interpretation" that the present soloist brings. He tops the whipped cream with more whipped cream. Too, the recording is not of the best quality, for the harmonics are a little strained. Still, Mr. Webster supplies a good accompaniment, and I confess a guilty adoration for this kind of dated music. So I recommend this disc—but let it not be said that the reader was not warned! —H. C. S.

STAMITZ: *Adagio*, and *Rondo*, from *Violin Concerto in B flat major*; played by Nathan Milstein with Arthur Balsam at the piano. Columbia disc 70747-D, price \$1.00.

▲ When a composition for violin and orchestra is arranged for violin and piano something is bound to be lost. Stamitz's scoring may be of the simplest and of considerably less interest than the solo instrumental part, but it remains a fact that even a meagre, unpretentious orchestral accompaniment is very apt to add color and depth to an adagio. The music of this adagio is not expressive of any salient emotional urge. It is simply a pleasant, unpretentious piece of music which Milstein plays with ingratiating purity of tone. The

rondo appeals to me more; it is bright and cheerful, and also buoyant, and therefore a bit more meaningful. The recording here is on the whole good, but I noted some rattle in the piano on a light-weight pick-up. —P. G.

#### Voice

BEETHOVEN: *Missa Solemnis*, Op. 123; performed by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Serge Koussevitzky, with Harvard Glee Club and Radcliffe Choral Society, Jeanette Vreeland (soprano), Anna Kaskas (contralto), John Pribe (tenor), Norman Cordon (bass), and E. Power Biggs at the organ. Victor sets M-758 and 759, six discs each, price \$13.00 complete.

▲ Neither of the previous recordings of the *Missa Solemnis* had the clarity of line or spaciousness of sound that this one has, and neither had the same considerate attention to dynamics. Koussevitzky traverses this score with a feeling for its

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strength, its dramatic connotations, and its beauty. The technical difficulties involved in performing this work are enormous, and the same holds true to an even greater degree in recording it. There are points in this performance that can be criticized, but can one be certain that these were all or in part the fault of the conductor? For example, he can hardly be blamed for the sudden overshadowing of the orchestra by the chorus in several sections: in parts of the Kyrie and toward the end of the Benedictus as well as in most of the loud choral sections. This recording was made at an actual performance and there are the usual sharp breaks, but aside from the cutting-off of one chord at the end of side 14, there are not as many disturbing elements about this recording as there might have been. Microphone placement for actual performances is often problematical, and one feels after hearing the entire performance that the recording engineers deserve credit for their work.

This set most assuredly belongs to the best things that Koussevitzky has accomplished for the phonograph. He has been more fortunate in his soloists than either of his predecessors was. And he has had the services of an admirable choir. Undoubtedly by virtue of tradition and environment, the old Catalonian Choir of Barcelona better understood and felt the spiritual power of the text. Yet these young singers from Radcliffe and Harvard sing with surprising energy, power and conviction. In the passages of conciliation and tenderness the guidance and inspiration of the conductor is fully revealed. It is doubtful if these singers would have achieved such results without his direction. The music of the *Missa Solemnis* is cruelly difficult, and although there are moments when the vocal strain suggests this fact, Koussevitzky's comprehending grasp of the spirit and style of the work does much to smooth over such moments. Those who follow the score will experience amazement upon more than one occasion at the power and endurance of both the chorus and the four soloists.

The importance of the *Missa Solemnis* and the story of its creation are told elsewhere in this issue. Because few have written more illuminatingly and more brilliant-

ly on works of this kind than the late Lawrence Gilman, we are happy to be able to include an article by him on this Mass.

In an article published in the September, 1935 issue of this magazine, Philip Barr points out that Beethoven's music requires greater and closer attention than Bach's, because it is the design first and foremost that counts; moreover, "it is no use to listen to this work with one's head full of Bach and Palestrina . . . the *Missa Solemnis* may not be church music in the accepted sense, but make no mistake: it is deeply religious music". As Gilman has said, it is a "strange blend of rapt spirituality and human drama"; for here, "Beethoven's passionate and dramatizing imagination overleapt all the bounds of institutional traditions and liturgical formulas to go its own imperious way."

Despite its weak points, it is a privilege to own this splendid performance.

CLASSIC AIRS—GRETRY: *Zémire et Azor*, *La Fauvette* (disc 2149); BISHOP: *Echo Song* (disc 2150); HANDEL: *Alma mia*, and *Allesandro*—*Lusinghe mia care* (disc 2151); PERGOLESI: *Se tu m'amai*; and BACH: *The Contest between Phoebus and Pan*—*O yes, just so* (disc 2152); sung by Lily Pons, accompanied by the Renaissance Quintet, and J. H. Bove (flute) in the Bishop. Victor set M-756, four 10 inch discs, price \$3.50.

▲ With the exception of the Bishop song, which is a product of the 19th century, all of these songs are appropriately presented with an 18th-century background of strings and harpsichord. Miss Pons is in fine voice throughout, save for a rather uncertain flight on a high F at the end of the *Echo Song*. It is unfortunate that the booklet does not provide translations of the songs, for undeniably people appreciate the music much more when English texts are included. The air from Gretry's *Zémire et Azor*, however, needs no knowledge of the words to enjoy, for it is frankly a coloratura aria designed to show off the singer's pyrotechnics. Galli-Curci some years ago made a record of this selection which is now withdrawn. Miss Pons sings this bright and ingratiating air with far more charm and persuasiveness than her

predecessor. *Zémire et Azor* is an opera based on a sort of Arabian Nights story; little is known about it today except that it brought tears to DuBarry's eyes when first performed. The present aria has no tears in it; in fact it is not much more than a bit of captivating froth.

Bishop of *Home, Sweet Home* and *Lo! Here the Gentle Lark* fame enjoyed considerable popularity in his day; Jenny Lind and Adelina Patti both sang his songs with considerable success. The *Echo Song* suggests Jenny Lind. It is purely a show piece in which the singer and the flute indulge in the usual duel, with the singer ostensibly winning out in the end. Some day some flutist is going to have nerve enough to turn the tables on a singer and offer a bit of flute technique which is going to be inimitable. Miss Pons vies with the flute here with complete assurance. The air certainly shows off the soprano advantageously; indeed she does some lovely singing, except for her final flight into alt.

The rest of Miss Pons' album consists of more substantial fare. Indeed, there will be many more people likely to want the last two discs than the first two, and we wouldn't be surprised if they made some new friends for her. *Alma mia*, unidentified on the label, comes from the opera *Floridante*. The companion air is from *Allesandro*, an opera in which Handel made the daring experiment of having the rival prima donnas Faustina and Cuzzoni appear together, and in which he took special pains to write equally effective parts for each. The present air was allotted to Faustina. The text is not of importance, the sentiment being, "Allurements the dearest, Love's arrows for glancing, what havoc you make in a man's eager heart." Miss Pons sings these two with considerable charm.

Pergolesi's *Se tu m'ami* is a beautiful example of early 18th-century Italian song writing. Claudia Muzio has already made a lovely recording of it. Although Miss Pons sings this song very well indeed, we cannot quite erase the memory of the more nuanced vocalism of Muzio. *Se tu m'ami* has to do with a perverse young lady; the text is based on the following lines—"If thou lovest me, gentle shepherd, I am sorry

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The air from Bach's secular cantata, *Contest between Phobus and Pan*, is sung by Momus. It is sprightly and carefree, and in keeping with the character. Miss Pons realizes its spirit delightfully. Those who think of Bach as an invariably serious composer should hear this little air; it represents the famous Leipzig organist in his lightest and gayest mood.

The reproduction here is very fine, and the balance between the voice and the ensemble is well contrived. —P. G.

ALABIEV: *The Russian Nightingale*; and BISHOP: *Lo! Here the Gentle Lark*; sung by Josephine Antoine, with J. H. Bove (flute) and Stuart Ross (piano). Columbia disc 71025-D, price \$1.00.

▲ Miss Antoine has a youthful charm and freshness, but her technical accomplishments are not as brilliant or as sensational as they might be. She sings here with greater ease and assurance than in her previous disc. There is a suggestion that the singer and flutist are too close to the microphone for their own good, for neither the blend nor the balance seems as smooth as it might be. —P. G.

BIZET: *Agnus Dei*; and GRANIER: *Hosanna*; sung by Enrico Caruso with Victor Symphony Orchestra. Victor disc 17814, price \$1.00.

▲ These are electrical re-recordings of two of Caruso's recordings made prior to the first World War. In both cases the tenor was in fine voice, and his noble singing lends considerable dignity to two religious songs which do not rise far above the Victorian ballad classification. Although these are not among the most successful of the Caruso dubbings, since the voice is somewhat veiled, they are still enjoyable for his splendid vocalism. That natural plangent richness of the great tenor's voice was one of its chief attractions, but those of us who heard and knew his singing on the stage feel that the old horn method of recording did not allow for the manifestation of the full expanse of his tone, and in not a few of his records there is a sugges-

tion of tonal compression. To us, this is apparent in both these selections. We only point it out here for the benefit of those who never heard the tenor in life, so they will not get the wrong impression of his voice. There are so many more valuable and musically enduring recordings of Caruso, one wonders why these trite selections were chosen for "enhancement". —P. G.

MENDELSSOHN: *Auf flügeln des Gesanges*, and *Suleika*; sung by Suzanne Sten. Columbia 10-inch disc 17264-D, price 75c.

▲ Miss Sten is an admirable musician, but she does not always employ her vocal gifts to the best advantage. In endeavoring to keep a simple flowing line in the familiar *Auf flügeln des Gesanges*, she develops too much tremolo for the good of the music. Her *Suleika* is more successfully sung, for here her voice is free of an unnatural vibrato. Lotte Lehmann and Elisabeth Schumann have both given more beautiful interpretations of the first song; indeed the Lehmann record, which dates from about 1927, is one of her best lieder offerings, even though the instrumental accompaniment is bad. This is a first recording of *Suleika*, an effective setting of the same Goethe poem that Schubert used. The text concerns itself with the west wind caressing the beloved, carrying her message to him, and lamenting the parting from him.

Miss Sten is fortunate in her accompanist, Leo Taubman. The recording is well done. —P. G.

GILBERT and SULLIVAN: *Patter Songs* —*My Object All Sublime* (*Mikado*); and *The Private Buffoon* (*Yeomen of the Guard*) (disc 4271-M); *Lord Chancellor's Song* (*Iolanthe*); and *My Name is John Wellington Wells* (*Sorcerer*) (disc 4272-M); *I Am the Monarch of the Sea*, and *When I Was a Lad* (*Pinafore*); and *The Major General's Song* (*Pirates of Penzance*); sung by Nelson Eddy, with orchestra conducted by Robert Armbruster. Columbia set M-440, three 10-inch discs, price \$2.75.

▲ Nelson Eddy's robust voice is quite different from that of the singers in the standard D'Oyly Carte sets of the operet-

tas. But be it said at once that Mr. Eddy is scarcely a Gilbert and Sullivan singer. Indeed, while it may be a decent voice judged by ordinary standards, he uses it very badly according to G & S criteria. The singer's anemic snicker when compared to the blood-curdling chuckle in the *Mikado* set, is proof enough. A good G & S singer must be able to suggest the character and, especially in these patter songs, must be a master of vocal caricature. Eddy sings the songs "straight", and often a bit thoughtfully, as though something else were on his mind. His attempt to convey the humor of the Buffoon's song is labored and very unfunny. Indeed, he sings all the selections as though he had no idea at all of the humor of the lines and the character of the singer. Chalk the whole thing up as an unfortunate attempt. Robert Armbruster's orchestral tempi are much too fast; one feels that he wants to end the spectacle as soon as possible. The recording is good.

—H. C. S.

#### MEDIAEVAL AND RENAISSANCE

CHORAL MUSIC for Equal Voices a Capella; sung by the Choir of the Pius X School of Liturgical Music, conducted by Mother G. Stevens, R. S. C. J. Victor set M-739, six discs, price \$6.50.

▲ One of the pleasantest experiences of its kind that stands out in my memory was a visit that I made some years ago to the Manhattanville College of the Sacred Heart and the Pius X School. Within the sheltered walls of this convent college, the hectic life of the world seemed far removed. Here was a world of peace and love and good will. Mother Dammann, the Superior, was a charming host; she told me about the work that was done there, and took me through that part of college I presume visitors of my status were permitted to see. She also introduced me to Mother Stevens, whose work as musical director of the college and the Pius X School has brought her fame in the outer world, where, as a member of her order, she may no longer go. Mother Stevens in turn showed me the School, and assembled a group of her girls to demonstrate for me how beautifully they sing. She is justly proud of her training of the girls, not only as singers of liturgical works but

as vocalists, for the good mother instructs them also in how to use their voices.

This album offers a rich harvest of music of the Mediaeval and Renaissance periods, all of which is sung with purity of intonation, beauty of tone and simple sincerity. One can immediately recognize the work of Mother Stevens, who is, of course, directing the Choir here. As fine as these performances are, however, it must be said that an all women's choir is not conducive to bringing out the full power, richness or strength of much of the later music represented here. Most of the selections were intended to be sung by mixed choirs, and the men's parts were often dominating ones. The loss of the resonant basses and the rich baritone parts tends to devitalize, and I find that even though I can enjoy the performances here because of the eminent qualities I have mentioned above, the lack of deeper and more varied sonorities than are evidenced here does not allow one to enjoy many selections at one time. The singing of an all-women's choir tends to become monotonous if taken in too large a dose.

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### RADIO-PHONOGRAPH SALE

WANTED: Bach—Little Fugue in G minor, played by Commette (organ). Columbia D-11028. Daniel B. Leary, Townsend Hall, 25 Niagara Square, Buffalo, N. Y.

The selections in the album are as follows: *Hymn of St. Adalbert* (circa 995); and (a) *Allcluia—Angelus Domini* (11th Century); (b) *Easter Gradual—Haec Dies* (Leoninus) (disc 13555); (a) *O Miranda Dei Caritas* (13th century); (b) *Puellare Gremium* (13th century); and (a) *Quam Pulchra Es* (Dunstable); (b) *Flagellants' Hymn* (1349) (disc 13556); *Flos Florum* (Dufay); and *Descant of the Holy Ghost* (from the *Cantigas* of Alfonso the Wise); *Qui Cum Patre* (Obrecht) (disc 13557); *Kyrie*, and *Agnus Dei*, from *Missa sine Nomine* (Obrecht) (disc 13558); *Credo* from *Missa sine Nomine* (Obrecht); and *Allcluia—Psallat* (late 13th century) (disc 13559); (a) *Audivi* (Taverner); (b) *Benedictus* from *Missa pro Defunctis* (Lasus); and (a) *Pueri Hebraeorum—Mode I* (Gregorian Chant); (b) *Pueri Hebraeorum* (Palestrina) (disc 13560).

—P. H. R.

ROSSINI: *Stabat Mater—Cujus animam*; and VERDI: *Requiem — Ingemisco Tanquam Reus*; sung by Jussi Bjoerling with orchestra conducted by Nils Grevillius. Victor disc 13588, price, \$1.00.

▲ A couple of months ago we had a complete recording of Verdi's *Requiem*, in which the tenor part was sung by Gigli. Although Gigli was in excellent voice and his reading of the *Ingemisco* was good, the performance here of Bjoerling is far more communicative; indeed one marks this as one of the best things he has done for the phonograph. Bjoerling's treatment of the musical line is more smoothly contrived. Gigli has a tendency to resort to darkening his tones to create a lachrymose effect, which is not always helpful to his singing since it clouds the tone; moreover this effect often stresses sentiment in the wrong way. Bjoerling sings the music manfully, straightforwardly, and he also does some pianissimo singing which is consistent with his vocal production. The only criticism I would make here is that the singer is apt to push a little too hard on his topmost tones.

Rossini's *Stabat Mater* is more or less neglected today. It is not easy music to sing and it belongs to a different generation; yet it is difficult indeed to decry some of the solos, such as the *Inflammatu*s, for

soprano and chorus, and the present aria. Caruso made a recording of this aria at one time, but I do not recall it as among his best efforts. Lambert Murphy, in his day a highly artistic singer, also recorded it. He was unable to accomplish the difficult high tessitura successfully; the high note in the latter part of the aria, which Bjoerling takes with ease and assurance, is a high C-sharp. In some ways, Bjoerling is even more successful here than in the Verdi selection, that is, his high tones are not pushed unduly. The manliness and freshness of the singer's voice are two of its best features, and these are fully evidenced in his singing of the *Cujus animam*. The accompanying orchestra is unusually good, and the recording is well balanced and spacious.

—P. G.

SCHUBERT: *Die Allmacht*, Op. 79, No. 2; sung by Kerstin Thorborg, contralto, with piano accompaniment by Leo Rosenek. Victor 10-inch disc 2148, price 75c.

▲ Here at last is a much needed recording of one of the biggest and most impressive things in the repertoire of solo song. To American collectors it is virtually a "first," since none of the electrical versions sung in the original German has been easily available in this country, and Louise Homer's 1910 acoustic is one of her rarest discs. The Lawrence Tibbett performance released nearly a year ago hardly counts, since the baritone sang the song in English.

It is just possible to fit this song on one side of a twelve-inch disc, but Mme. Thorborg favors a broader tempo, preferring to break the song into two ten-inch sides. The resulting sacrifice of continuity is just one of the things which collectors of discs have to put up with. All in all this is certainly the most successful of the Swedish contralto's German lieder recordings. Here is a song which gives full scope to the fullness and power of her voice. The opening and closing—both on the words *Gross ist Jehova der Herr*—are appropriately ear-filling and majestic. If in the contrasting middle section, in which the poet finds evidence of the Lord's greatness in the trees of the forest and in the waving fields of corn, the vocal line is not quite



as chiseled as we might like it, the fault, I think, lies chiefly in the singer's slightly sloppy German diction. She understands the poem, which is the most important thing. Leo Rosenek provides an accompaniment which has the persistent drive so necessary to the song, and he has been recorded with sufficient fullness. All things considered, while not the all-time definitive recording of *Die Allmacht*, this one will carry us very nicely until that masterpiece arrives.

—P. M.

**WAGNER: Parsifal**—Duet from Act 2; sung by Kirsten Flagstad, soprano, and Lauritz Melchior, tenor, with the Victor Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Edwin McArthur. Victor set M-755, four discs, price \$4.00.

▲ The Flagstad-Melchior team has been active in the studios of late—perhaps it is their intention to give us recordings of all the big soprano-tenor scenes in Wagner. The *Parsifal* duet thus reaches its first complete American recording, although portions of it have been done before. There is undoubtedly a public waiting for it. This

public is, of course, thoroughly familiar with the singing of the two protagonists, so the important thing is to report that the voices have been well recorded.

I have in my collection an acoustical Odeon recording of the passage beginning *Amfortas, die Wunde*, sung, as it is in the present version, by Mr. Melchior. Since that intensely interesting souvenir dates back to the early nineteen twenties, it makes an interesting study in comparison with the new set and also with the tenor's performance with the Philadelphia Orchestra and Eugene Ormandy released by Victor in 1938. The voice, naturally, was fresher on the old disc, but the style of the singer has undergone surprisingly little change with the passing years. The greater vitality in the recent versions is due certainly quite as much to the modern recording as the ripening of the singer's art.

Mme. Flagstad, for her part, is a rather lady-like seductress. Other Kundrins have given the famous *Ich sah das Kind* passage a more sinuous line than she—I am thinking especially of Matzenauer's acoustic re-

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cording—and like all the rest the Norwegian lady is heavily taxed by some of the fiendish music she is called upon to sing toward the end of the scene. In the matter of balance between voice and orchestra, her part fares better than Melchior's, since the tremendous resonance of the tenor's voice is inclined to record too powerfully. In this respect the passage he made with Ormandy is preferable to his new performance. But for those who want the scene entire there is no choice. And the balance here is better than in the previous recorded collaborations of these artists. The brief lines of Klingsor are sung by Gordon Dilworth.

—P. M.

### Speech

SCENES FROM SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS; recited by Otis Skinner and Cornelia Otis Skinner. Victor set M-753, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ Sidney Thomas, who wrote the booklet for this set, states that "Shakespeare was great, not in spite of his audience, but because of it." I would be inclined to disagree. Had Shakespeare followed the dictates of his Elizabethan audience, he might never have progressed beyond *Titus Andronicus*. To me, Shakespeare's triumph lies in the fact that in his greater plays he gave the audience what it wanted, to be sure, but at the same time mixed it with the greatest poetry ever conceived. Like all practical dramatists, he was forced to adhere to certain conventions, but he managed to keep a high level of dramaturgic craftsmanship in spite of them. And that is what makes *Hamlet* superior to *The Spanish Tragedy*. But the conventions were always present, and the Ghost in *Hamlet*, the scene where Lear's eyes are removed, and the play of words on the name Kate in *The Taming of the Shrew* are ample evidence that the dramatist had to keep his audience in mind.

Of course, modern audiences find much more in the plays than Elizabethans did. Consequently they are acted differently. From all 17th-century evidence, Elizabethan acting was largely a matter of declamation rather than characterization. The plays were full of long, rolling, juicy lines that a player could deliver with the impact of a roll of thunder. Much of the verse of

Marlowe's *Tamerlane*, for instance, does little to further the action; but what need of action when the "mighty line", resounding from the capacious chest of a Burbage, could hold an audience fixed? In this respect, Otis Skinner is close to Shakespeare in the present set.

His acting is of the old school, and within its limitations it is good. But most of the younger generation have been brought up in a different tradition, and look for a subtle suggestion of character and more subtlety in vocal inflections. Such people, I imagine, will find Skinner's performance definitely lacking in those attributes. They will point out the obviousness of the way the actor does Antony's funeral oration and will question the validity of his Macbeth. And certainly, the murder scene, which is acted here, falls flat. It is impossible to convey on records the utter horror of that scene as done on the stage. Too, here (as elsewhere in the album) Skinner has omitted several lines, which is a little disturbing to those who know the famous scene word by word.

The quality of the old actor's voice has changed very little through the years, and he gets a surprisingly youthful feeling into his *Taming of the Shrew* lines. Still, I do not think that anyone would mistake the voice for that of a young man. Miss Skinner's voice is as delightful as ever. She acts in the tradition of her father, and the two collaborate very nicely. Some things they do beautifully, and some, I think, without too great an understanding of the characters and lines. Limitations of space forbid a discussion of the reasons for this conclusion; a full explanation would entail a line-by-line analysis and an interpretation of those lines in relation to the plot and characters.

Recorded herein are the *Murder Scene* from *Macbeth* (disc 17762), *The Wooing Scene* and *Katherine's Advice* from *The Taming of the Shrew* (disc 17763), and a group consisting of *Antony's Oration* from *Julius Caesar*, the *Potion Speech* from *Romeo and Juliet*, *Portia's Quality of Mercy* from *The Merchant of Venice*, and Jacques' *All the World's a Stage* from *As You Like It* (disc 17764). —H. C. S.

INDIAN MUSIC OF THE SOUTH-WEST, Vol. 1, recorded by Laura Boulton. Victor set P-49, six 10-inch discs, price \$6.75.

▲ Since Mrs. Boulton's first album of primitive music, which she originally recorded in Africa on the Strauss West African Expedition (Victor set P-10), was brought out, she has been in the Southwest among the American Indians making other records. This is the result of her work in that field. Let it be said at the outset that I have heard more interesting and vital musical demonstrations from the Southwestern Indians. Nor can I say that this album is as interesting as its predecessor. But one ought not to deny that the work Mrs. Boulton has done may have scientific value. It may be that after listening to some of these recordings repeatedly one will discover things in them that are not apparent on a first hearing. Like most primitive music, the forms are largely repetitions of a particular pattern stated at the outset, and those of us who are accustomed to formal development are apt to find music of this sort rather thin fare.

From a historical standpoint these records are of considerable value, and as a source reference to the rhythmic and modal patterns of the Southwestern American Indians they will undoubtedly prove useful. Mrs. Boulton contributes a comprehensive booklet in which she tells the history and subject of each song. It is a worthy scientific venture, excellently accomplished.

The selections in the album are as follows: *Mudhead Kachina*, rattle and drums (Hopi Indians, Arizona); and *Harvest Dance Song* (Zuni Indians, New Mexico) (disc 90); *Squaw Dance*, drum; and *Night Chant*, rattles (Navajo Indians, Arizona) (disc 91); *Horse Stealing Song*, drum; and *Corn Dance*, *Comanche Song*, drum (Rio Grande Pueblo, New Mexico) (disc 92); *Drum Dance*, *Midnight Dance* (Rio Grande Pueblos, New Mexico), and *Bird Song*, *Ailsba Chant* (Mohave Indians, Arizona) (disc 93); *Medicine Song*, *Girl's Coming of Age Song* (Papago Indians, Arizona); and *Social Dance* (Pima Indians, Arizona) (disc 94); *Horse Dance* (Apache Indians), and *Crown Dance* (Apache, New Mexico) (disc 95).

April, 1941

## Other Recordings

FRIML MELODIES—Vol. I; sung by Frank Parker (tenor), Margaret Daum (soprano), Stanley McClelland (baritone) and Victor mixed chorus, dir. Emile Cote. Victor set P-58, three 10-inch discs, price \$2.00.

TSCHAIKOWSKY: *In Church*; and IPOLITOW-IVANOW: *Bless the Lord, O my Soul*; sung by the Siberian Singers, direction of Nicholas Vasilieff. Victor 10-inch disc 4540, price 75c.

● Because of an unavoidable delay, Mr. Archetti's *Swing Music Notes* will not appear this month. Hereafter this department will appear every other month. Ed.

## In the Popular Vein

Horace Van Norman

AAAA—NBC's Chamber Music Society of Lower Basin Street. Guest artists: Dinah Shore and Sidney Bechet. Victor set P-56, three 10-inch discs, price \$2.00.

● One of the brighter spots on the air waves the past several months has been NBC's Lower Basin Street program. Its sprightly arrangements have been attractive enough in themselves, but what has given the program particular distinction have been the serio-comic announcements by Gene Hamilton and the satirical slant that has been followed on the entire program. Without the latter, it would be just another house program, with eminently competent but none too inspired house musicians and arrangers. It therefore comes as no very great surprise that one of the most attractive features of the set is the program notes by Welbourn Kelley (who also annotates the program on the air). There is some fantastically funny stuff here. Dinah Shore, says Mr. Kelley, "is the girl who starts fires by rubbing two notes together." Sidney Bechet, he opines, "makes a soprano saxophone sound like no nice soprano saxophone should sound like." There is a whole lot more in this vein, and it all makes for a welcome change in a field where humor—even bad humor—is generally absent. As for the recordings themselves, they include *Muskrat Ramble*, *Dinah's Blues*, and *Basin Street Blues* (all with the eight-piece hot group), and *Mood Indigo*, *Shoemaker's Holiday*, and *Runnin' Wild* (with the ten-piece woodwind group). Dinah Shore sings *Dinah's Blues* and *Mood Indigo*, doing a particularly mag-

nificent job on the latter. Bechet plays fast and furiously on *Muskrat Ramble*. The woodwind arrangements are skillful and tricky, but seem definitely inferior, on the whole, to the work that Alec Wilder was doing with an almost identical instrumental set-up in his Octet recordings.

AAAA—*Boogie Woogie*. Harry James' Trio, Count Basie's Famous Five, Joe Turner, Albert Ammons, and Meade Lux Lewis. Columbia set C-44, four 10-inch discs, price \$2.50.

● Here are some welcome reprints of some of the finest boogie woogie records ever made. Harry James' *Boo-Woo* and *Woo-Woo* contain some of the most exciting trumpet work ever put on wax, while such recordings as *Boogie Woogie Prayer* and *Roll 'Em, Pete* set a standard that has never been surpassed by Messrs. Ammons, Lewis, and Johnson either individually or collectively. In these days, when boogie woogie is fast becoming a drug on the market, it's a distinctly first-rate idea to have an album of this sort which gives the kernel of the whole thing.

AAA—*Dolores*, and *De Camptown Races*. Bing Crosby. Decca 3644.

● The incomparable Bing, who can sing any old thing and make it sound like a million dollars, here has material that is worthy of his efforts, and the result is one of his best discs in months. *Dolores*, written by Lou Alter, has been described by a songwriter friend of mine as the sort of number that Walter Donaldson used to write. It is one of those numbers that you like on first hearing and continue to enjoy as often as you hear it. Bing is given discreet, properly un-tricky vocal support by the Merry Macs on this one, with brother Bob's band supplying the instrumental background. *De Camptown Races*, Foster's perennial favorite, is a rollicking reverse, and the combination of the two songs serves to illustrate Bing's all-encompassing versatility as well as anything could.

AAA—*Dancing in the Dark*, and *Smoke Gets in Your Eyes*. Artie Shaw and his Orchestra. Victor 27335.

● *Dancing in the Dark* is about Shaw's best effort in the sweet category to date. For all that he has prided himself on blazing trails and creating innovations with his present band, the bulk of his recordings do not substantiate any such claim. Merely adding four or five strings to a band is nothing in itself; what really counts is what's done with them. In *Dancing in the Dark*, the much-vaunted strings are really made to sing with effectiveness and charm. The echoes of Stravinsky's *L'Oiseau de Feu* at the end are amusing. *Smoke Gets in Your Eyes* is played by the Gramercy 5, and does not succeed in changing our deeply rooted belief that this lovely tune simply cannot be played in dance time.

AAA—*Beauitced*, and *This Is New*. Benny Goodman and his Orchestra. Columbia 35944.

● The current Rodgers and Hart musical, *Pal Joey*, bears among its many distinctions that of having some of the nastiest lyrics ever to be heard on a New York stage (which is certainly going

some). But those who expect to hear any of the gutter quatrains in this recording of *Beauitced* will be disappointed. The lyrics recorded here are innocuous enough to pass anyone's purity test; and since one is not distracted by the lurid lines, there is an opportunity to enjoy the tune, which is one of Dick Rodger's best. The Goodman performance isn't ideal. It isn't suave enough, for one thing; and recordings of Rodger's songs should always be suave. *This Is New*, the melody number from *Lady in the Dark*, turns out much better. This is, in fact, a really exceptional arrangement (probably by Sauter), and the band never sounded better.

AAA—*Off the Record*, and *We Three*. Bob Chester and his Orchestra. Bluebird B-10865.

● *Off the Record* is another of those stumblingly-gaيتed novelties that we're being deluged with these days. There are about a million of them, and they're all spawned by Jimmy Lunceford's *For Dancers Only*. But all that I've heard have been inferior to it, except the present number. *Off the Record* has considerable harmonic originality, and the performance by Bob Chester is exceedingly tight and competent.

AAA—*Friendly Tavern Polka*, and *Broadway Caballero*. Horace Heidt and his Orchestra. Columbia 36006.

● *Friendly Tavern* is a rollicking novelty that could very well turn out to be another *Beer Barrel* with the proper break. Heidt's performance is A-1, with a very stylish half-chorus by Frankie Carle sparking the whole thing.

#### OTHER CURRENT POPULAR RECORDINGS OF MERIT

AAA—I'm *Falling for You*, and *Jelly, Jelly*. Earl Hines and his Orchestra. Bluebird B-11065.

AAA—*Turn Left*, and *Turn Right*. Jimmy Dorsey and his Orchestra. Decca 3647.

AAA—*Undecided Blues*, and *Tuesday at Ten*. Count Basie and his Orchestra. Okeh 6071.

AAA—I'll *Always You*, and *Ida, Sweet as Apple Cider*. Glenn Miller and his Orchestra. Bluebird B-11079.

AAA—*Sweet Georgia Brown*, and *Down by the Old Mill Stream*. Gene Krupa and his Orchestra. Okeh 6070.

AAA—*Mellow Stuff*, and *Jitterbug's Jump*. Seger Ellis and his Orchestra. Okeh 6051.

AAA—*Wigwam Stomp*, and *Maria, Mari*. Tony Pastor and his Orchestra. Bluebird B-11087.

AAA—*The Captain and His Men*, and *Birmingham Breakdown*. Charlie Barnet and his Orchestra. Bluebird B-11081.

AA—*Brazilian Nuts*, and *Bobby's Trombone Blues*. Bobby Byrne and his Orchestra. Decca 3648.

AA—*Blue Flame*, and *Fur Trappers' Ball*. Woody Herman and his Orchestra. Decca 3643.

AA—*Cuban Boogie Woogie*, and *Ring Dem Bells*. Andy Kirk and his Clouds of Joy. Decca 3663.

AA—*Whap's Cookin'*, and *Hey, Sit Down, Bud*. Charlie Spivak and his Orchestra. Okeh 6061.

AA—*That Old Gang of Mine*, and *Bluebird Boogie Woogie*. Teddy Powell and his Orchestra. Bluebird B-11082.

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